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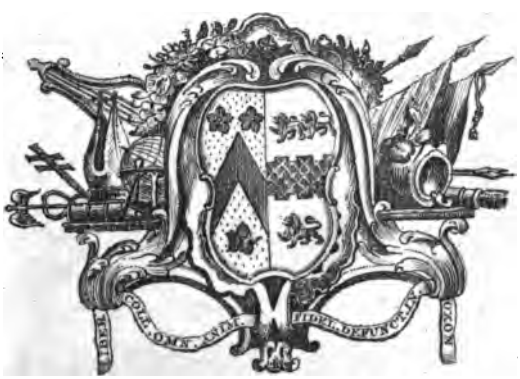

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GIVE
BY A

SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH OF

the late

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

VOLUME I.

ON THE

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God.---St. PETER.

BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

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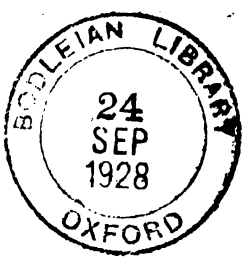
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MEMOIRS

OF THE

REFORMATION IN FRANCE,

AND OF

THE LIFE

OF THE

REV. JAMES SAURIN.

THE celebrated Mr. Saurin, author of the following sermons, was a French refugee, who, with thousands of his countrymen, took shelter in Holland from the persecutions of France. The lives, and even the sermons, of the refugees are so closely connected with the history of the reformation in France, that we presume, a short sketch of the state of religion in that kingdom till the banishment of the protestants by Lewis XIV. will not be disagreeable to some of the younger part of our readers.

Gaul, which is now called France, in the time of Jesus Christ, was a province of the Roman empire, and some of the apostles planted christianity in it. In the first centuries, while christianity continued a rational religion, it extended and supported itself without the help, and against the persecutions, of the Roman emperors. Numbers were converted from paganism, several christian societies were formed, and many eminent men, having spent their lives in preaching and writing for the advancement of the gospel, sealed their doctrine with their blood.

In the fifth century, Clovis I. a pagan king of France, fell in love with Clotilda, a christian princess of the house of Burgundy, who agreed to marry him only on condition of his becoming a christian, to which he consented 491. The king, however, delayed the performance of this condition till five years after his marriage, when, being engaged in a desperate battle, and having reason to fear the total defeat of his army, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and put up this prayer, *God of Queen Clotilda! grant me the victory, and I vow to be baptized, and thenceforth to worship no other God but thee!* He obtained the victory, and, at his return, was baptized at Rheims, Dec. 25, 496. His sister, and more than three thousand of his subjects, followed his example, and christianity became the profest religion of France.

Conversion implies the cool exercise of reason, and whenever passion takes the place, and does the office of reason, conversion is nothing but a name. Baptism did not wash away the sins of Clovis; before it he was vile, after it he was infamous, practising all kinds of treachery and cruelty. The court, the army, and the common people, who were pagan when the king was pagan, and christian when he was christian, continued the same in their morals after their convertion as before. When the christian church, therefore, opened her doors, and delivered up her keys, to these new converts, she gained nothing in comparison of what she lost. She increased the number, the riches, the pomp, and the power, of her family; but she resigned the exercise of reason, the sufficiency of scripture, the purity of worship, the grand simplicity of innocence, truth, and virtue, and became a creature of the state. A virgin before:—she became a prostitute now.

Such christians, in a long succession, converted christianity into something worse than paganism. They elevated the christian church into a temporal kingdom, and they degraded temporal kingdoms into fiefs of the church. They founded dominion in grace, and they explained grace to be a love of dominion. And by these means they completed that general apostacy, known by the name of *Popery*, which St. Paul had foretold, 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. and which rendered the reformation of the sixteenth century essential to the interests of all mankind.

The state of religion at that time (1515) was truly deplorable. Ecclesiastical *government*, instead of that evangelical

gelical simplicity, and fraternal freedom, which Jesus Christ and his apostles had taught, was become a spiritual domination under the form of a temporal empire. An innumerable multitude of dignities, titles, rights, honours, privileges, and pre-eminences belonging to it, and were all dependent on a sovereign priest, who, being an absolute monarch, required every thought to be in subjection to him. The chief ministers of religion were actually become temporal princes, and the high-priest, being absolute sovereign of the ecclesiastical state, had his court and his council, his ambassadors to negociate, and his armies to murder—his flock. The clergy had acquired immense wealth, and, as their chief study was either to collect and to augment their revenues, or to prevent the alienation of their estates, they had constituted numberless spiritual corporations, with powers, rights, statutes, privileges, and officers. The functions of the ministry were generally neglected, and, of consequence, gross ignorance prevailed. All ranks of men were extremely depraved in their morals, and the Pope's penitentiary had published the price of every crime, as it was rated in the tax-book of the Roman chancery. Marriages, which reason and scripture allowed, the Pope prohibited, and for money dispensed with those, which both forbad. Church-benefices were sold to children, and to laymen, who then let them to under tenants, none of whom performed the duty, for which the profits were paid: but all having obtained them by simony, spent their lives in fleecing the flock to repay themselves. The power of the pontiff was so great, that he assumed, and, what was more astonishing, he was suffered to exercise a supremacy over many kingdoms. When monarchs gratified his will, he put on a triple crown, ascended a throne, suffered them to call him *Holiness*, and to kiss his feet. When they disobliged him, he suspends all religious worship in their dominions; published false and abusive libels, called bulls, which operated as laws, to injure their persons; discharged their subjects from obedience; and gave their crowns to any who would usurp them. He claimed an infallibility of knowledge, and an omnipotence of strength; and he forbad the world to examine his claim. He was addressed by titles of blasphemy, and tho' he owned no jurisdiction over himself, yet he affected to extend his authority over heaven and hell, as well as over a middle place called purgatory, of all which places, he said he kept the keys. This irregular church-

polity

polity was attended with quarrels, intrigues, schisms, and wars.

Religion itself was made to consist of the performance of numerous ceremonies, of pagan, jewish, and monkish extraction, all which might be performed without either faith in God, or love to mankind. The church ritual was an address, not to the reason, but to the senses of men; music stole the ear, and soothed the passions; statues, paintings, vestments, and various ornaments, beguiled the eye; while the pause, which was produced by that sudden attack, which a multitude of objects made on the senses, on entering a spacious decorated edifice, was enthusiastically taken for devotion. Blind obedience was first allowed by courtesy, and then established by law. Public worship was performed in an unknown tongue, and the sacrament was adored as the body and blood of Christ. The credit of the ceremonial produced in the people a notion, that the performance of it was the practice of piety, and religion degenerated into gross superstition. Vice, uncontrolled by reason or scripture, retained a pagan vigour, and committed the most horrid crimes; and superstition atoned for them, by building and endowing religious houses, and by bestowing donations on the church. Human merit was introduced, saints were invoked, and the perfections of God were distributed by canonization, among the creatures of the Pope.

The pillars, that *supported* this edifice, were immense riches, arising, by imposts, from the sins of mankind; idle distinctions between supreme and subordinate adoration; senseless axioms, called the divinity of the schools; preachments of buffoonery, or blasphemy, or both; cruel casuistry, consisting of a body of dangerous and scandalous morality; false miracles and midnight visions; spurious books and paltry relics; oaths, dungeons, inquisitions, and crusades. The whole was denominated THE HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH, and laid to the charge of Jesus Christ.

Loud complaints had been made of these excesses, for the last hundred and fifty years, to those whose business it was to reform, and, bad as they were, they had owned the necessity of reformation, and had repeatedly promised to reform. Several councils had been called for the purpose of reforming: but nothing had been done, nor could any thing be expected from assemblies of mercenary men, who were too deeply interested in darkness to vote for day. They were inflexible

flexible against every remonstrance, and, as a Jesuit has since expressed it, *They would not extinguish one taper, tho' it were to convert all the Hugonots in France.*

The restorers of literature reiterated and reasoned on these complaints: but they reasoned to the wind. The church champions were hard driven, they tried every art to support their cause: but as they could neither get rid of the attack by a polite duplicity, nor intimidate their sensible opponents by anathemas, as they would not determine the matter by scripture, and as they could not defend themselves by any other method, as they were too obstinate to reform themselves, and to proud to be reformed by their inferiors, the plaintiffs at length laid aside thoughts of applying to them, and, having found out *the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free*, went about reforming themselves. The reformers were neither popes, cardinals, nor bishops; but they were good men, who aimed to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind. This was the state of the church, when Francis I. ascended the throne, 1515.

Were we to enter into a minute examination of the reformation in France, we would own a particular interposition of Providence; but we would also take the liberty to observe, that a happy conjunction of jarring interests rendered the sixteenth century a fit æra for reformation. Events, that produced, protected, and persecuted reformation, proceeded from open and hidden, great and little, good and bad causes. The capacities and the tempers, the virtues and the vices, the views and the interests, the wives and the mistresses, of the princes of those times; the abilities and dispositions of the officers of each crown; the powers of government, and the persons who wrought them; the tempers and genuises of the people; all these, and many more, were springs of action, which, in their turns, directed the great events that were exhibited to public view. But our limits allow no inquiries of this kind.

The reformation, which began in Germany, had extended itself to Geneva, and thence into France. The French had a translation of the bible, which had been made, in 1224, by Guiars des Moulins. It had been revised, corrected, and printed at Paris, 1487, by order of Charles VIII. and the study of it now began to prevail. The reigning king, who was a patron of learning, encouraged his valet de chambre, Clement Marot, to versify some of David's psalms, and took great

great pleasure in singing them,* and either protected, or persecuted the reformation, as his interest seemed to him to require. Although in 1535, he went in procession to burn the first martyrs of the reformed church, yet, in the same year, he sent for Melancthon to come into France to reconcile religious differences. Although he persecuted his own protestant subjects with infinite inhumanity, yet, when he was afraid that the ruin of the German protestants would strengthen the hands of the emperor Charles V. he made an alliance with the protestant princes of Germany, and allowed the Duke of Orleans, his second son, to offer them the free exercise of their religion in the Dukedom of Luxemburg. He suffered his sister, the Queen of Navarre, to protect the reformation in her country of Bearn, and even saved Geneva, when Charles Duke of Savoy would have taken it. It was no uncommon thing, in that age, for princes to trifle thus with religion. His majesty's first concern was to be a king, his second to act like a rational creature.

The reformation greatly increased in this reign. The pious Queen of Navarre made her court a covert from every storm, supplied France with preachers, and the exiles at Geneva with money. Calvin who in 1534, had fled from his rectory in France, and had settled at Geneva in 1541, was a chief instrument; he slid his catechism and other books into France. Some of the bishops were inclined to the reformation: but secretly, for fear of the christians of Rome. The reformation was called Calvinism. The people were named Sacramentarians, Lutherans, Calvinists: and nick-named *Hugonots*, either from Hugon, a Hobgoblin, because, to avoid persecution, they held their assemblies in the night: or from the gate Hugon, in Tours, where they used to meet; or from a Swiss word which signifies a league.

Henry II. who succeeded his father Francis, 1547, was a weak, and a wicked prince. The increase of his authority was *the law and the prophets* to him. He violently persecuted the

* His majesty's favourite psalm, which he sang when he went a hunting was the 42d The queen used to sing the 6th, and the king's mistress the 130th. Marot translated fifty, Beza the other hundred, Calvin got them set to Music by the best musicians, and every body sang them as ballads. When the reformed churches made them a part of their worship, the papists were forbidden to sing them any more, and to sing a psalm was a sign of a Lutheran.

the calvinists of France, because he was taught to believe, that heresy was a faction repugnant to authority; and he made an alliance with the German protestants, and was pleased with the title of *Protector of the Germanic liberties*, that is, protector of *protestantism*. This alliance he made in order to check the power of Charles V. He was governed, sometimes by his queen, Catharine de Medicis, niece of Pope Clement VII. who, it is said, never did right, except she did it by mistake: often by the constable de Montmorenci, whom, contrary to the express command of his father, in his dying illness, he had placed at the head of administration: chiefly by his mistress, Diana of Poitiers, who had been mistress to his father, and who bore an implacable hatred to the protestants: and always by some of his favourites, whom he suffered to amass immense fortunes by accusing men of heresy. The reformation was very much advanced in this reign. The genry promoted the acting of plays, in which the comedians exposed the lives and doctrines of the popish clergy, and the poignant wit and humour of the comedians afforded infinite diversion to the people, and conciliated them to the new preachers. Beza, who had fled to Geneva, 1548, came backward and forward into France, and was a chief promoter of the work. His Latin testament, which he first published in this reign, was much read, greatly admired, 1556, and contributed to the strength of the cause. The new testament was the Goliah's sword of the clerical reformers, *there was none like it*,

Francis II succeeded his father Henry, 1559. He was only in the sixteenth year of his age, extremely weak both in body and mind, and therefore incapable of governing the kingdom by himself. In this reign began those civil wars, which raged in France for almost forty years. They have been charged on false zeal for religion: but this charge is a calumny, for the crown of France was the prize for which the generals fought. It was that which inspired them with hopes and fears, productive of devotions, or persecutions, as either of them opened access to the throne. The interests of religion, indeed, fell in with these views, and so the parties were blended together in war.

The family of Charles the Great, which had reigned in France for 236 years, either became extinct, or was deprived of its inheritance, at the death of Lewis the Lazy in 987. Him Hugh Capet had succeeded, and had transmitted the crown to his own posterity, which, in this reign subsisted

sisted in two principle branches, in that of Valois, which was in possession of the throne, and that of Bourbon, the next heir to the throne of France, and then in possession of Bearn. The latter had been driven out of the kingdom of Navarre: but they retained the title, and were sometimes at Bearn and sometimes at the court of France. The house of Guise, Dukes of Lorrain, a very rich and powerful family, to whose niece, Mary Queen of Scots, the young king was married, pretended to make out their descent from Charles the Great, and were competitors, when the times served, with the reigning family for the throne, and, at other times, with the Bourbon family, for the apparent heirship to it. With these views they directed their family alliances, perfected themselves in military skill, and intrigued at court for the administration of affairs. These three houses formed three parties. The house of Guise, (the chiefs of which were five brethren at this time) headed one; the King of Navarre, the princes of the blood, and the great officers of the crown, the other; the Queen-mother, who managed the interests of the reigning family, exercised her policy on both, to keep either from becoming too strong; while the feeble child on the throne was alternately a prey to them all.

Protestantism had obtained numerous converts in the last reign. Several princes of the blood, some chief officers of the crown, and many principal families, had embraced it, and its partizans were so numerous, both in Paris and in all the provinces, that each leader of the court parties deliberated on the policy of strengthening his party by openly espousing the reformation, by endeavouring to free the protestants from penal laws, and by obtaining a free toleration for them. At length, the house of Bourbon declared for protestantism, and, of consequence, the Guises were inspired with zeal for the support of the ancient religion, and took the roman catholics under their protection. The king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, were the heads of the first: but the Duke of Guise had the address to obtain the chief management of affairs, and the protestants were persecuted with insatiable fury all the time of this reign.

Had religion then no share in these commotions? Certainly it had, with many of the princes, and with multitudes of the soldiers: but they were a motley mixture; one fought for his coronet, another for his land, a third for liberty of conscience, and a fourth for pay. Courage was a joint

joint stock, and they were mutual sharers of gain or loss, praise or blame. It was religion to secure the lives and properties of noble families, and though the common people had no lordships, yet they had the more valuable rights of conscience, and for them they fought. We mistake, if we imagine that the French have never understood the nature of civil and religious liberty, they have well understood it, though they have not been able to obtain it. *Suum cuique* would have been as expressive a motto as any that the protestant generals could have borne.

The persecution of the protestants was very severe at this time. Counsellor Du Bourg, a gentleman of eminent quality, and great merit, was burnt for heresy, and the court was inclined, not only to rid France of protestantism, but Scotland also, and sent La Brosse with three thousand men to assist the Queen of Scotland in that pious design. This was frustrated by the intervention of Queen Elizabeth of England. The persecution becoming every day more intolerable, and the king being quite inaccessible to the remonstrances of his people, the protestants held several consultations, and took the opinions of their ministers, as well as those of their noble partizans, on the question, whether it were lawful to take up arms in their own defence, and to make way for a free access to the king to present their petitions? It was unanimously resolved, that it was lawful, and it was agreed, that a certain number of men should be chosen, who should go on a fixed day, under the direction of Lewis Prince of Conde, present their petition to the king, and seize the Duke of Guise, and the Cardinal of Lorrain, his brother, in order to have them tried before the states. This affair was discovered to the duke by a false brother, the design was defeated and twelve hundred were beheaded. Guise pretended to have suppressed a rebellion, that was designed to end in the dethroning of the king, and, by this manœuvre, he procured the general lieutenancy of the kingdom, and the glorious title of *Conservator of his country*. He pleased the puerile king by placing a few gaudy horseguards round his palace, and he infatuated the poor child to think himself and his kingdom rich and happy, while his protestant subjects lay bleeding through all his realm.

The infinite value of an able statesman, in such important crisis as this, might here be exemplified in the conduct of Michael de L'Hospital, who at this time, 1560, was promoted to the chancellorship: but our limits will not allow an enlarge-

ment. He was the most consummate politician that France ever employed. He had the wisdom of governing without the folly of discovering it, and all his actions were guided by that cool moderation, which always accompanies a superior knowledge of mankind. He was a concealed protestant of the most liberal sentiments, an entire friend to religious liberty, and it was his wise management that saved France. It was his fixed opinion, that FREE TOLERATION was sound policy. We must not wonder that rigid papists deemed him an atheist, while zealous, but mistaking, protestants pictured him carrying a torch behind him, to guide others, but not himself. The more a man resembles God, the more will his conduct be censured by ignorance, partiality, and pride!

The Duke of Guise, in order to please and strengthen his party, endeavoured to establish an inquisition in France. The chancellor, being willing to parry a thrust, which he could not entirely avoid, was forced, in May 1560, to agree to a severer edict than he could have wished to defeat the design. By this edict, the cognizance of the crime of heresy was taken from the secular judges, and given to the bishops alone. The calvinists complained of this, because it put them into the hands of their enemies: and although their Lordships condemned and burnt so many hereticks, that their courts were justly called, *chambres ardentes*,* yet the zealous catholics thought them less elegible than an inquisition, after the manner of Spain.

Soon after the making of this edict, many families having been ruined by it, Admiral Coligny, in August 1560, presented a petition to the king, in the names of all the protestants in France, humbly praying that they might be allowed the free exercise of their religion. The king referred the matter to the parliament, who were to consult about it with the lords of his council. A warm debate ensued, and the catholics carried it against the protestants by three voices. It was resolved, that people should be obliged, either to conform to the old established church, or to quit the kingdom, with permission to sell their estates. The protestants argued, that in a point of such importance, it would be unreasonable, on account of three voices, to inflame all France with animosity and war: that the method of banishment was impossible to be executed: and that the obliging of those

* Burning courts, fire offices.

those, who continued in France, to submit to the Romish religion, against their consciences, was an absurd attempt, and equal to an impossibility. The chancellor, and the protestant lords, used every effort to procure a toleration, while the catholic party urged the necessity of uniformity in religion. At length two of the bishops owned the necessity of reforming, pleaded strenuously for moderate measures, and proposed the deciding of these controversies in an assembly of the states, assisted by a national council, to be summoned at the latter end of the year. To this proposal the assembly agreed.

The court of Rome, having laid it down, as an indubitable maxim in church police, that an inquisition was the only support of the hierarchy, and dreading the consequences of allowing a nation to reform itself, was alarmed at this intelligence, and instantly sent a nuncio into France. His instructions were to prevent, if possible, the calling of a national council, and to promise the re-assembling of the general council of Trent. The protestants had been too often dupes to such artifices as these, and, being fully convinced of the futility of general councils, they refused to submit to the council of Trent now for several good reasons. The pope, they said, who assembled the council, was to be judge in his own cause: the council would be chiefly composed of Italian bishops, who were vassals of the pope as a secular prince, and sworn to him as a bishop and head of the church: the legates would pack a majority, and bribe the poor bishops to vote: each article would be first settled at Rome, and then proposed by the legates to the council; the emperor, by advice of the late council of Constance, had given a safe conduct to John Huss, and to Jerom of Prague, however, when they appeared in the council, and proposed their doubts, the council condemned them to be burnt. The protestants had reason on their side, when they rejected this method of reforming, for the art of procuring a majority of votes is the soul of this system of church-government. This art consists in the ingenuity of finding out, and in the dexterity of addressing each man's weak side, his pride or his ignorance, his envy, his gravity, or his avarice: and the possessing of this is the perfection of a legate of Rome.

During these disputes, the king died without issue, December 5, 1560, and his brother Charles IX. who was in the eleventh year of his age, succeeded him, December 13.

The

The states met at the time proposed. The chancellor opened the session by an unanswerable speech on the ill policy of persecution, he represented the miseries of the protestants, and proposed an abatement of their sufferings, till their complaints could be heard in a national council. The prince of Conde, and the king of Navarre, were the heads of the protestant party, the Guises were the heads of their opponents, and the queen-mother, Catharine of Medicis, who had obtained the regency till the king's majority, and who began to dread the power of the Guises, leaned to the protestants, which was a grand event in their favour. After repeated meetings, and various warm debates, it was agreed, as one side would not submit to a general council, nor the other to a national assembly, that a *conference* should be held at Poissy, July, 1561, between both parties, and an edict was made, that no persons should molest the protestants, that the imprisoned should be released, and the exiles called home.

The conference at Poissy was held, August 1561, in the presence of the king, the princes of the blood, the nobility, cardinals, prelates, and grandees of both parties. On the popish side, six cardinals, four bishops, and several dignified clergymen, and on the protestant about twelve of the most famous reformed ministers, managed the dispute. Beza, who spoke well, knew the world, had a ready wit, and a deal of learning, displayed all his powers in favour of the reformation. The papists reasoned, where they could, and, where they could not, they railed. The conference ended September 29, where most public disputes have ended, that is, where they began; for great men never enter these lists without a previous determination not to submit to the disgrace of a public defeat.

At the close of the last reign the ruin of protestantism seemed inevitable; but now the reformation turned like a tide, overspread every place, and seemed to roll away all opposition, and in all probability, had it not been for one sad event, it would now have subverted popery in this kingdom. The king of Navarre, who was now lieutenant general of France, had hitherto been a zealous protestant, he had taken incredible pains to support the reformation, and had assured the Danish ambassador that, in a year's time, he would cause the true gospel to be preached throughout France. The Guises caballed with the pope and the king of Spain, and offered to invest the king of Navarre with the kingdom

kingdom of Sardinia, and to restore to him that part of the kingdom of Navarre, which lay in Spain, on condition of his renouncing protestantism. The lure was tempting, and the king deserted, and even persecuted, the protestants. Providence is never at a loss for means to effect its designs. The queen of Navarre, daughter of the last queen, who had hitherto preferred a dance before a sermon, was shocked at the king's conduct, and instantly became a zealous protestant herself. She met with some unkind treatment, but nothing could shake her resolution; *Had I*, said she, *the kingdoms in my hand, I would throw them into the sea, rather than defile my conscience by going to Mass.* This courageous profession saved her a deal of trouble and dispute!

The protestants began now to appear more publicly than before. The queen of Navarre caused Beza openly to solemnize a marriage in a noble family, after the Genevan manner. This, which was consummated near the court, emboldened the ministers, and they preached at the countess de Senignan's, guarded by the marshal's provosts. The nobility thought that the common people had as good a right to hear the gospel as themselves, and caused the reformed clergy to preach without the walls of Paris. Their auditors were thirty or forty thousand people, divided into three companies, the women in the middle, surrounded by men on foot, and the latter by men on horseback; and, during the sermon, the governor of Paris placed soldiers to guard the avenues, and to prevent disturbances. The *morality* of this worship cannot be disputed, for, if God be worshipped in spirit and truth, the place is indifferent. The *expediency* of it may be doubted; but in a persecution of forty years, the French protestants had learnt that their political masters did not consider how rational, but how formidable they were.

The Guises, and their associates, being quite dispirited, retired to their estates, and the queen-regent, by the chancellor's advice, granted an edict to enable the protestants to preach in all parts of the kingdom, except in Paris, and in other walled cities. The parliaments of France had then the power of refusing to register royal edicts, and the chancellor had occasion for all his address to prevail over th scruples and ill humour of the parliament to procure the registering of this. He begged leave to say, that the question before them was one of those which had its difficulties, on whatever side it was viewed; that in the present case,

one,

one, of two things, must be chosen, either to put all the adherents of the new religion to the sword; or to banish them entirely, allowing them to dispose of their effects; that the first point could not be executed, since that party was too strong both in leaders and partizans; and, tho' it could be done, yet as it was staining the king's youth with the blood of so many of his subjects, perhaps when he came of age he would demand it at the hands of his governors; with regard to the second point, it was as little feasible, and could it be effected, it would be raising as many desperate enemies as exiles; that to enforce conformity against conscience, as matters stood now, was to lead the people to atheism. The edict at last was passed, Jan. 1562, but the house registered it with this clause, *in consideration of the present juncture of the times; but not approving of the new religion in any manner, and till the king shall otherwise appoint.* So hard sat toleration on the minds of papists!

A minority was a period favourable to the views of the Guises, and this edict was a happy occasion of a pretence for commencing hostilities. The duke, instigated by his mother, went to Vassi, a town adjacent to one of his lordships, and, some of his retinue picking a quarrel with some protestants, who were hearing a sermon in a barn, he interested himself in it, wounded two hundred, and left sixty dead on the spot, March 1, 1562. This was the first protestant blood, that was shed in civil war.

The news of this affair flew like lightening, and, while the duke was marching to Paris with a thousand horse, the city, and the provinces rose in arms. The chancellor was extremely afflicted to see both sides preparing for war, and endeavoured to dissuade them from it. The constable told him, *it did not belong to men of the long robe to give their judgment with relation to war.* To which he answered, that *tho' he did not bear arms, he knew when they ought to be used.* After this they excluded him from the councils of war.

The queen-regent, alarmed at the duke's approach to Paris, threw herself into the hands of the protestants, and ordered Conde to take up arms, Aug. 1562. War began, and barbarities and cruelties were practised on both sides. The duke of Guise was assassinated, the king of Navarre was killed at a siege, fifty thousand protestants were slain, and, after a year had been spent in these confusions, a peace was concluded, 1563. All, that the protestants obtained,

tained, was an edict, which excluded the exercise of their religion from cities, and restrained it to their own families.

Peace did not continue long, for the protestants, having received intelligence, that the pope, the house of Austria, and the house of Guise, had conspired their ruin, and fearing that the king, and the court, were inclined to crush them, as their rights were every day infringed by new edicts, took up arms again in their own defence, 1567. The city of Rochelle declared for them, and it served them for an asylum for sixty years. They were assisted by queen Elizabeth of England, and by the German princes, and they obtained, at the conclusion of this second war, 1568, the revocation of all penal edicts, the exercise of their religion in their families, and the grant of six cities for their security.

The pope, the king of Spain, and the Guises, finding that they could not prevail while the wise chancellor retained his influence, formed a cabal against him, and got him removed. He resigned very readily, June 1568, and retired to a country seat, where he spent the remainder of his days. A strange confusion followed in the direction of affairs, one edict allowed liberty, another forbad it, and it was plain to the protestants that their situation was very delicate and dangerous. The articles of the last peace had never been performed, and the papists every where insulted their liberties, so that, in three months time, two thousand Hugonots were murdered, and the murderers went unpunished. War broke out again, 1568. Queen Elizabeth assisted the protestants with money, the Count Palatine helped them with men, the queen of Navarre parted with her rings and jewels to support them, and, the prince of Conde being slain, she declared her son, prince Henry, the head, and protector of the protestant cause, and caused medals to be struck with these words, *a safe peace, a complete victory, a glorious death.* Her majesty did every thing in her power for the advancement of the cause of religious liberty, and she used to say, that *liberty of conscience ought to be preferred before honours, dignities, and life itself.* She caused the new testament, the catechism, and the liturgy of Geneva, to be translated, and printed at Rochelle. She abolished popery, and established protestantism in her own dominions. In her leisure hours, she expressed her zeal by working tapestries with her own hands, in which she represented the monuments of that liberty, which she procured by shaking off the yoke of the pope. One suit consisted of

twelve pieces. On each piece was represented some scripture history of *deliverance;* Israel coming out of Egypt, Joseph's release from prison, or something of the like kind. On the top of each piece were these words, *where the spirit is there is liberty*, and in the corners of each were broken chains, fetters, and gibbets. One piece represented a congregation at mass, and a fox, in a friar's habit, officiating as a priest, grinning horribly and saying, *the Lord be with you.* The pieces were fashionable patterns, and dexterously directed the needles of the ladies to help forward the reformation.

After many negociations a peace was concluded, 1570, and the free exercise of religion was allowed in all but walled cities, two cities in every province were assigned to the protestants, they were to be admitted into all universities, schools, hospitals, public offices, royal, seignioral, and corporate, and, to render the peace of everlasting duration, a match was proposed between Henry of Navarre and the sister of king Charles. These articles were accepted, the match was agreed to, every man's sword was put up in its sheath, and the queen of Navarre, her son, king Henry, the princes of the blood, and the principal protestants, went to Paris to celebrate the marriage, Aug. 18, 1572. A few days after the marriage, the Admiral, who was one of the principal protestant leaders, was assassinated, Aug. 22. This alarmed the king of Navarre, and the prince of Conde, but, the king and his mother promising to punish the assassin, they were quiet. The next Sunday, being St Bartholomew's day, Aug. 24, when the bells rang for morning prayers, the duke of Guise, brother of the last, appeared with a great number of soldiers, and citizens, and began to murder the Hugonots, the wretched Charles appeared at the windows of his palace, and endeavoured to shoot those who fled, crying to their pursuers, *kill them, kill them.* The massacre continued seven days, seven hundred houses were pillaged; five thousand people perished in Paris; neither age, nor sex, nor even women with child were spared; one butcher boasted to the king that he had hewn down a hundred and fifty in one night. The rage ran from Paris to the provinces, where twenty five thousand more were cruelly slain; the queen of Navarre was poisoned; and, during the massacre, the king offered the king of Navarre, and the young prince of Conde, son of the late prince, if they would not renounce Hugonotism, either *death, mass,* or *bastile:*

for,

for, he said, he would not have one left to reproach him. This bloody affair does not lie between Charles IX. his mother Catharine of Medicis, and the duke of Guise, for the church of Rome, and the court of Spain, by exhibiting public rejoicings on the occasion, have adopted the whole for their own, or, at least, have claimed a large share.

Would any one after this propose passive obedience, and non-resistance, to French protestants? Or, can we wonder, that, abhorring a church, who offered to embrace them with hands reeking with the blood of their brethren, they put on their armour again, and commenced a fourth civil war? The late massacre raised up also another party, called *politicians*, who proposed to banish the family of Guise from France, to remove the queen-mother and the Italians from the government, and to restore peace to the nation. This faction was headed by Montmorency, who had an eye to the crown. During these troubles, the king died, in the twenty fifth year of his age, 1574. Charles had a lively little genius, he composed a book on hunting, and valued himself on his skill in physiognomy. He thought courage consisted in swearing and taunting at his courtiers. His diversions were hunting, music, women and wine. His court was a common sewer of luxury and impiety, and, while his favourites were fleecing his people, he employed himself in the making of rhymes. The part he acted in the Bartholomean tragedy, the worst crime that was ever perpetrated in any christian country, will mark his reign with infamy to the end of time.

Henry III. who succeeded his brother Charles, was first despised, and then hated, by all his subjects. He was so proud that he set rails round his table, and affected the pomp of an eastern king: and so mean that he often walked in procession with a beggarly brotherhood, with a string of beads in his hand, and a whip at his girdle. He was so credulous that he took the sacrament with the duke of Guise, and with the Cardinal of Lorrain, his brother; and so treacherous that he caused the assassination of them both, 1588. He boasted of being a chief adviser of the late massacre, and the protestants abhorred him for it. The papists hated him for his adherence to the Hugonot house of Bourbon, and for the edicts which he sometimes granted in favour of the protestants, though his only aim was to weaken the Guises. The ladies held him in execration for his unnatural practices: and the duchess of Montpensier talked of

clipping his hair, and of making him a monk. His heavy taxes, which were consumed by his favourites, excited the populace against him, and, while his kingdom was covering with carnage, and drenching in blood, he was training lapdogs to tumble, and parrots to prate.

In this reign, 1576, was formed the famous *league*, which reduced France to the most miserable condition that could be. The chief promoter of it was the duke of Guise. The pretence was the preservation of the catholic religion. The chief articles were three. *The defence of the catholic religion. The establishment of Henry III. on the throne. The maintaining of the liberty of the kingdom, and the assembling of the states.* Those, who entered into the league, promised to obey such a general as should be chosen for the defence of it, and the whole was confirmed by oath. The weak Henry subscribed it at first in hopes of subduing the Hugonots; the queen-mother, the Guises, the Pope, the king of Spain, many of the clergy, and multitudes of the people, became *leaguers*. When Henry perceived that Guise was aiming by this league to dethrone him, he favoured the protestants, and they obtained an edict, 1576, for the free exercise of their religion: but edicts were vain things against the power of the league, and three civil wars raged in this reign.

Guise's pretended zeal for the romish religion allured the clergy, and France was filled with seditious books and sermons. The preachers of the league were the most furious of all sermon-mongers. They preached up the excellence of the established church, the necessity of uniformity, the horror of hugonotism, the merit of killing the *tyrant* on the throne, (for so they called the king) the genealogy of the house of Guise, and every thing else that could inflame the madness of party-rage. It is not enough to say that these abandoned clergymen disgraced their office, truth obliges us to add, they were protected, and preferred to dignities in the church, both in France and Spain.

The nearer the Guises approached to the crown, the more were they inflamed at the sight of it. They obliged the king to forbid the exercise of the protestant religion. They endeavoured to exclude the King of Navarre, who was now the next heir to the throne, from the succession. They began to act so haughtily that Henry caused both the duke and the cardinal to be assassinated, 1588. The next year 1589, he himself was assassinated by a friar. Religion flourishes

tishes where nothing else can grow, and the reformation diffused itself more and more in this reign. The exiles at Geneva filled France with a new translation of the bible, with books, letters, catechisms, hymns, and preachers, and the people, contrasting the religion of Christ with the religion of Rome, entertained a most serious aversion for the latter.

In the last king ended the family of Valois, and the next heir was Henry IV. of the house of Bourbon, King of Navarre. His majesty had been educated a protestant, and had been the protector of the party, and the protestants had reason to expect much from him on his ascending the throne of France: but he had many difficulties to surmount, for could the men, who would not bear a hugonot subject, bear a hugonot king? Some of the old faction disputed his title, and all insisted on a *christian* king. Henry had for him on the one side, almost all the nobility, the whole court of the late king, all protestant states and princes, and the old hugonot troops: on the other he had against him, the common people, most of the great cities, all the parliaments except two, the greatest part of the clergy, the Pope, the King of Spain, and most catholic states. Four years his majesty deliberated, negociated, and fought, but could not gain Paris. At length, the league set up a king of the house of Guise, and Henry found that the throne was inaccessable to all but papists, he therefore renounced heresy before Dr. Benoit, a moderate papist, and professed his conversion to popery. Paris opened its gates, 1594, the pope sent an absolution, and Henry became a *most christian king*. Every man may rejoice that his virtue is not put to the trial of refusing a crown!

When his majesty got to his palace in Paris, he thought proper to conciliate his new friends by shewing them particular esteem, and played at cards the first evening with a lady of the house of Guise, the most violent leaguer in all the party. His old servants who had shed rivers of blood to bring the house of Bourbon to the throne, thought themselves neglected. While the protestants were slighted, and while those, who had followed the league, were disengaging themselves from it on advantageous conditions, one of the king's old friends said; "We do not envy your killing the fatted calf for the prodigal son, provided you do not sacrifice the obedient son to make the better entertainment for the prodigal. I dread those bargains, in which things are given up, and

and nothing got but mere words, the words of those who hitherto have had no words at all."

By ascending the throne of France, Henry had risen to the highest degree of wretchedness. He had offered violence to his conscience by embracing popery, and he had stirred up a general discontent among the French protestants. The queen of England, and the protestant states, reproached him bitterly, the league refused to acknowledge him till the pope had absolved him in form, the king of Spain caballed for the crown, several cities held out against him, many of the clergy thought him an hypocrite, and refused to insert his name in the public prayers of the church, the lawyers published libels against him, the jesuits threatened to assassinate him, and actually attempted to do it. In this delicate and difficult situation, though his majesty manifested the frailty of humanity by renouncing protestantism, yet he extricated himself and his subjects from the fatal labyrinths in which they were all involved, so that he deservedly acquired even from his enemies the epithet *Great*, though his friends durst not give him that of *Good*.

The king had been so well acquainted with the protestants, that he perfectly knew their principles, and, could he have acted as he would, he would have instantly granted them all they wanted. Their enemies had falsely said, that they were enemies to government: but the king knew better, and he also knew that the claims of his family would have been long ago buried in oblivion, had not the protestants supported them. Marshal Biron had been one chief instrument of bringing him to the throne. The marshal was not a good hugonot, nor did he profess to be a papist: but he espoused the protestant party, for he was a man of great sense, and he hated violence in religion; and there were many more of the same cast. Parties, however, ran so high that precipitance would have lost all, and Henry was obliged to proceed by slow and cautious steps.

The deputies of the reformed churches soon waited on his majesty to congratulate him, and to pray for liberty. The king allowed them to hold a general assembly, and offered them some slight satisfaction: but the hardy veteran Hugonots, who had spent their days in the field, and who knew also that persons, who were of approved fidelity, might venture to give the king their advice without angering him, took the liberty of reminding him that they would not be paid in compliments for so many signal services. Their ancestors,

cestors, and they had supported his right to the crown along with their own right to liberty of conscience, and as Providence had granted the one, they expected that the other would not be denied. The king felt the force of these remonstrances, and ventured to allow them to hold provincial assemblies; after a while, to convene a national synod, and, as soon as he could, he granted them the famous EDICT OF NANTZ.

The Edict of Nantz, which was called *perpetual* and *irrevocable*, and which contained ninety-two articles, beside fifty-six secret articles, granted to the protestants liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of religion; many churches in all parts of France, and judges of their own persuasion; a free access to all places of honour and dignity, great sums of money to pay off their troops; an hundred places as pledges of their future security, and certain funds to maintain both their preachers and their garrisons. The king did not send this edict to be registered in parliament till the pope's legate was gone out of the kingdom, so that it did not get there till the next year. Some of the old party in the house boggled at it very much, and particularly because the hugonots were hereby qualified for offices, and places of trust: but his majesty sent for some of the chiefs to his closet, made them a most pathetic speech on the occasion, and with some difficulty brought them to a compliance. It is easy to conceive that the king might be very pathetic on this occasion, for he had seen and suffered enough to make any man so: The meanest hugonot soldier could not avoid the pathos, if he related his campaigns. But it is very credible, that it was not the pathos of his majesty's language, but the power in his hand, that affected these intolerant souls.

No nation ever made a more noble struggle for recovering liberty of conscience out of the rapacious hands of the papal priesthood than the French. And one may venture to defy the most sanguine friend to intolerance to prove, that a free toleration hath, in any country, at any period, produced such calamities in society as those, which persecution produced in France. After a million of brave men had been destroyed, after nine civil wars, after four pitched battles, after the besieging of several hundred places, after more than three hundred engagements, after poisoning, burning, assassinating, massacreing, murdering in every form, France is forced to submit to what her wise chancellor de L'Hospital

pital had at first proposed, A FREE TOLERATION. Most of the zealous leaguers voted for it, because *they had found by experience* they said, *that violent proceedings in matters of religion prove more destructive than edifying.* A noble testimony from enemies mouths!

France now began to taste the sweets of peace, the king employed himself in making his subjects happy, and the far greater part of his subjects endeavoured to render him so. The protestants applied themselves to the care of their churches, and as they had at this time a great many able ministers, they flourished, and increased the remaining part of this reign. The doctrine of their churches was calvinism, and their discipline was presbyterian, after the Genevan plan. Their churches were supplied by able pastors; their universities were adorned with learned and pious professors, such as Casaubon, Daille, and others, whose praises are in all the reformed churches; their provincial, and national synods were regularly convened, and their people were well governed. Much pains were taken with the king to alienate his mind from his protestant subjects: but no motives could influence him. He knew the worth of the men, and he protected them till his death. This great prince was hated by the popish clergy for his lenity, and was stabbed in his coach by the execrable Ravillac, May 14, 1610, whose name inspires one with horror and pain.

Lewis XIII. was not quite nine years of age, when he succeeded his father Henry. The first act of the queen-mother, who had the regency during the king's minority, was the confirmation of the edict of Nantz. Lewis confirmed it again, in 1614, at his majority, promising to observe it inviolably. The protestants deserved a confirmation of their privileges at his hands; for they had taken no part in the civil wars and disturbances, which had troubled his minority. They had been earnestly solicited to intermeddle with government: but they had wisely avoided it.

Lewis was a weak ambitious man, he was jealous of his power to excess, though he did not know wherein it consisted. He was so void of prudence, that he could not help exalting his flatterers into favourites, and his favourites into excessive power. He was so timorous that his favourites became the objects of his hatred, the moment after he had elevated them to authority; and he was so callous that he never lamented a favourite's death or downfall. By a solemn act of devotion, attended with all the farce of pictures, masses,

masses, processions, and festivals, he consecrated his person, his dominions, his crown and his subjects to the Virgin Mary, in 1638, desiring her to defend his kingdom, and to inspire him with grace to lead a holy life. The popish clergy adored him for thus sanctifying their superstitions by his example, and he, in return, lent them his power to punish his protestant subjects, whom he hated. His panegyrists call him Lewis *the just*: but they ought to acknowledge that his majesty did nothing to merit the title till he found himself a dying.

Lewis's prime minister was an artful, enterprizing clergyman, who, before his elevation, was a country bishop, and, after it, was known by the title of Cardinal de Richlieu: but the most proper title for his eminence is that, which some historians give him, of the *Jupiter Maclator* of France. He was a man of great ability: but of no merit. Had his virtue been as great as his capacity, he ought not to have been intrusted with government, because all cardinals take an oath to the pope, and although an oath does not bind a bad man, yet as the taking of it gives him credit, so the breach of it ruins all his prospects among those, with whom he hath taken it.

The jesuits, who had been banished, in 1594 from France for attempting the life of Henry IV. had been recalled, in 1604, and restored to their houses, and one of their society, under pretence of being responsible as an hostage for the whole fraternity, was allowed to attend the king. The jesuits, by this mean, gained the greatest honour and power, and, as they excelled in learning, address, and intrigue, they knew how to obtain the king's ear, and how to improve his credulity to their own advantage.

This dangerous society was first formed in 1534 by Ignatius Loyola, a Spanish deserter, who, being frighted out of the army by a wound, took it into his head to go on pilgrimage, and to form a religious society for the support of the catholic faith. The popes, who knew how to avail themselves of enthusiasm in church government. directed this grand spring of human action to secular purposes, and, by canonizing the founder, and arranging the order, elevated the society in a few years to a height that astonished all Europe. It was one opinion of this society, that the authority of kings is inferior to that of the people, and that they may be punished by the people in certain cases. It was another maxim with them, that sovereign princes have

received from the hand of God a sword to punish heretics. The jesuits did not invent these doctrines; but they drew such consequences from them as were most prejudicial to the public tranquillity: for, from the conjunction of these two principles, they concluded that an heretical prince ought to be deposed, and that heresy ought to be extirpated by fire and sword, in case it could not be extirpated otherwise. In conformity to the first of these principles, two kings of France had been murdered successively, under pretext that that they were fautors of heretics. The parliament in this reign, 1615, condemned the first as a pernicious tenet, and declared that the authority of monarchs was dependent only on God: but the last principle, that related to the extirpation of heresy, as it flattered the court and the clergy, came into vogue. *Jus divinum* was the test of sound orthodoxy, and this reasoning became popular argumentation, *Princes* MAY *put heretics to death; therefore they* OUGHT *to put them to death,*

Richlieu, who had wriggled himself into power, by publishing a scandalous libel on the protestants of France, advised the king to establish his authority, by extirpating the intestine evils of the kingdom. He assured his majesty that the Hugonots had the power of doing him mischief, and that it was a principle with them, that kings might be deposed by the people. The protestants replied to his invectives, and exposed the absurdity of his reasoning. Richlieu reasoned thus: John Knox, the Scotch reformer, did not believe the divine authority of kings. Calvin held a correspondence with Knox, therefore Calvin did not believe it. The French reformed church derived its doctrine from Calvin's church of Geneva, therefore the first Hugonots did not believe it. The first Hugonots did not believe it, therefore the present Hugonots do not believe it. No man who valued the reputation of a man of sense, would have scaled the walls of preferment with such a ridiculous ladder as this!

The king, intoxicated with despotical principles, followed the fatal advice of his minister, and began with his patrimonial province of Bearn, where he caused the catholic religion to be established, 1620. The Hugonots broke out into violence at this attack on their liberties, whence the king took an opportunity to recover several places from them, and at last made peace with them on condition of their demolishing all their fortifications except those of Montauban and

and Rochelle. Arnoux, the Jesuit, who was a creature of Richlieu's, was, at that time, confessor to Lewis *the just.*

The politic Richlieu invariably pursued his design of rendering his master absolute. By one art he subdued the nobility, by another the parliaments, and, as civil and religious liberty, live and die together, he had engines of all sorts to extirpate heresy. He pretended to have formed the design of re-uniting the two churches of protestants and catholics. He drew off from the protestant party the dukes of Sully, Bouillon, Lesdeguieres, Rohan, and many of the first quality: for he had the world, and its glory to go to market withal; and he had to do with a race of men, who were very different from their ancestors. Most of them had either died for their profession, or had fled out of the kingdom, and several of them had submitted to practise mean trades, in foreign countries, for their support; but these were endeavouring to serve God and mammon, and his eminence was a fit casuist for such consciences.

The protestants had resolved, in a general assembly, to die rather than to submit to the loss of their liberties; but their king was weak, their prime minister was wicked, their clerical enemies were powerful and implacable, and they were obliged to bear those infractions of edicts, which their oppressors made every day. At length, Richlieu determined to put a period to their hopes by the taking of Rochelle. The city was besieged both by sea and land, and the efforts of the besieged were at last overcome by famine, for they had lived without bread for thirteen weeks, and, of eighteen thousand citizens, there were not above five thousand left, 1625. The strength of the protestants was broken by this stroke. Montauban agreed now to demolish its works, and the *just* king confirmed anew the *perpetual* and *irrevocable* edict of Nantz, as far as it concerned a free exercise of religion.

The cardinal, not content with temporal power, had still another claim on the protestants of a spiritual kind. Cautionary towns must be given up to that, and conscience to this. He suffered the edict to be infringed every day, and he was determined not to stop till he had established an uniformity in the church, without the obtaining of which, he thought, something was wanting to his master's power. The protestants did all that prudence could suggest. They sent the famous Amyraut to complain to the king of the infraction of their edicts, 1631. Mr. Amyraut was a person

proper to go on this business. He had an extreme attachment to the doctrine of passive obedience, this rendered him agreeable to the court; and he had declared for no obedience in matters of conscience, and this made him dear to the protestants. The synod ordered him not to make his speech to the king kneeling, as the deputies of the former synod had done; but to procure the restoring of the privilege, which they formerly enjoyed, of speaking to the king, standing, as the other ecclesiastics of the kingdom were allowed to do. The cardinal strove, for a whole fortnight, to make Amyraut to submit to this tacit acknowledgment of the clerical character in the popish clergy, and of the want of it in the reformed ministers. But Amyraut persisted in his claim, and was introduced to the king as the synod had desired. The whole court was charmed with the deputy's talents and deportment. Richlieu had many conferences with him, and if negociation could have accommodated the dispute between arbitrary power and upright consciences, it would have been settled now. He was treated with the utmost politeness, and dismissed If he had not the pleasure of reflecting that he had obtained the liberty of his party, he had, however, the peace that ariseth from a consciousness of having used a proper mean to obtain it. The same mean was tried, some time after, by the inimitable Du Bosc, whom his countrymen call a PERFECT ORATOR, but alas! he was eloquent in vain.

The affairs of the protestants waxed every day worse and worse. They saw the clouds gathering, and they dreaded the weight of the storm; but they knew not whither to flee. Some fled to England, but no peace was there. Laud, the tyrant of the English church, had a Richlieu's heart without his head, he persecuted them, and, in conjunction with Wren, and other such churchmen, drave them back to the infinite damage of the manufactures of the kingdom, 1634. It must affect every liberal eye to see such Professors as Amyraut, Chappel, and De la Place, such ministers as Mestrezat, and Blondel, who would have been an honour to any community, driven to the sad alternative of flying their country, or of violating their consciences. But their time was not yet fully come.

Cardinal Richlieu's hoary head went down to the grave, 1642, without the tears of his master, and with the hatred of all France. The king soon followed him, 1643, complaining, in the words of Job, *my soul is weary of my life.*

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The protestants had increased greatly in numbers in this reign, tho' they had lost their power; for they were now computed to exceed two millions. So true it is, that violent measures in religion weaken the church that employs them.

Lewis XIV. was only in the fifth year of age at the demise of his father. The queen-mother was appointed sole regent during his minority, and cardinal Mazarine, a creature of Richlieu's, was her prime minister. The edict of Nantz was confirmed, 1643, by the regent, and again by the king at his majority, 1652. But it was always the cool determination of the minister to follow the late Cardinal's plan, and to revoke it as soon as he could, and he strongly impressed the mind of the king with the expediency of it.

Lewis, who was a perfect tool to the Jesuits, followed the advice of Mazarine, of his confessors, and of the clergy about him, and as soon as he took the management of affairs into his own hand, 1661, he made a firm resolution to destroy the Protestants. He tried to weaken them by buying off their great men, and he had but too much success. Some indeed, were superior to this state-trick, and it was an noble answer which the marquis de Bougy gave, when he was offered a marshal's staff, and any government that he might make choice of, provided he would turn papist. *Could I be prevailed on,* said he, *to betray my God, for a marshal of France's staff, I might betray my king for a thing of much less consequence; but I will do neither of them, but rejoice to find that my services are acceptable, and that the religion, which I profess, is the only obstacle to my reward.* Was his majesty so little versed in the knowledge of mankind, as not to know that saleable virtue is seldom worth buying?

The king used another art as mean as the former. He exhorted the bishops to take care, that the points in controversy betwixt the catholics and calvinists should be much insisted on by the clergy, in their sermons, especially in those places that were mostly inhabited by the latter, and that a good number of missionaries should be sent among them to convert them to the religion of their ancestors. It should seem, at first view, that the exercise of his majesty's power in this way would be formidable to the protestants, for, as the king had the nomination of eighteen archbishops, a hundred and nine bishops, and seven hundred and fifty abbots, and as these dignitaries governed the inferior clergy,

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it is easy to see that all the popish clergy of France were creatures of the court, and several of them were men of good learning. But the protestants had no fears on this head. They were excellent scholars, masters of the controversy, hearty in the service, and the mortifications, to which they had been long accustomed, had taught them that temperate coolness, which is so essential in the investigating and supporting of truth. They published, therefore, unanswerable arguments for their non-conformity. The famous Mr. Claude, pastor of the church at Charenton, near Paris, wrote *a defence of the reformation*, which all the clergy of France could not answer. The bishops, however, answered the protestants all at once, by procuring an edict which forbid them to print.

The king, in prosecution of his design, excluded the calvinists from his houshold, and from all other employments of honour and profit, he ordered all the courts of justice, erected by virtue of the edict of Nantz, to be abolished, and, in lieu of them, made several laws in favour of the catholic religion, which debarred from all liberty of abjuring the catholic doctrine, and restrained those protestants, who had embraced it, from returning to their former opinions, under severe punishments. He ordered soldiers to be quartered in their houses till they changed their religion. He shut up their churches, and forbad the ministerial function to their clergy, and, where his commands were not readily obeyed, he levelled their churches with the ground. At last, Oct. 22, 1685, he revoked the edict of Nantz, and banished them from the kingdom.

"A thousand dreadful blows, says Mr Saurin, were struck at our afflicted churches before that, which destroyed them: for our enemies, if I may use such an expression, not content with seeing our ruin, endeavoured to taste it. One while edicts were published against those who, foreseeing the calamities that threatened our churches, and not having power to prevent them, desired only the sad consolation of not being spectators of their ruin. Another while, Aug. 1669, against those, who, through their weakness, had denied their religion, and who, not being able to bear the remorse of their consciences, desired to return to their first profession. One while, May 1679, our pastors were forbidden to exercise their discipline on those of their flocks, who had abjured the truth. Another while, June 1680, children of seven years of age were allowed to embrace doctrines,

trines, which, the church of Rome allows, are not level to the capacities of adults, June 1681. A college was suppressed, and then a church shut up, Jan. 1683. Sometimes we were forbid to convert infidels; and sometimes to confirm those in the truth, whom we had instructed from their infancy, and our pastors were forbidden to exercise their pastoral office any longer in one place than three years. Sometimes the printing of our books was prohibited, July 1685, and sometimes those which we had printed, were taken away. One while, we were not suffered to preach in a church, Sept. 1685, and another while we were punished for preaching on its ruins, and at length we were forbidden to worship God in public at all. Now, Oct. 1685, we were banished, then, 1689, we were forbidden to quit the kingdom on pain of death. Here, we saw the glorious rewards of some who betrayed their religion; and there, we beheld others, who had the courage to confess it, a haling to a dungeon, a scaffold, or a galley. Here, we saw our persecutors drawing on a sledge the dead bodies of those who had expired on the rack. There, we beheld a false friar tormenting a dying man, who was terrified, on the one hand, with the fear of hell if he should apostatize, and, on the other, with the fear of leaving his children without bread, if he should continue in the faith: yonder, they were tearing children from their parents, while the tender parents were shedding more tears for the loss of their souls, than for that of their bodies, or lives."

It is impossible to meet with parallel instances of cruelty among the heathens in their persecutions of the primitive christians. The bloody butchers, who were sent to them under the name of *dragoons*, invented a thousand torments to tire their patience, and to force an abjuration from them. "They cast some, says Mr Claude, into large fires, and took them out when they were half roasted. They hanged others with large ropes under the arm-pits, and plunged them several times into wells, till they promised to renounce their religion. They tied them like criminals on the rack, and poured wine with a funnel into their mouths, till, being intoxicated, they declared that they consented to turn catholics. Some they slashed and cut with penknives, others they took by the nose with red hot tongs, and led them up and down the rooms till they promised to turn catholics." These cruel proceedings made eight hundred thousand persons quit the kingdom.

If

If the same actions may proceed from different principles, it must be always a hazardous, and often an unjust attempt, to assign the true motives of men's conduct. But public actions fall under public notice, and they deserve censure, or commendation, according to the obvious good, or evil, which they produce in society. The art of governing requires a superior genius, and a superior genius hides, like a lofty mountain, its summit in the clouds. In some cases, a want of capacity, and in others a fund of selfishness, would prevent a subject's comprehension of his prince's projects, and consequently, his approbation of his prince's measures; and for these reasons, the cabinets of princes should be the least accessible, and their hearts the most impenetrable parts of their dominions: but when the prince would reduce his projects to practice, and cause his imaginations to become rules of action to his subjects, he ought to give a reason for his conduct, and, if his conduct be rational, he will do so, for as all law is founded in reason, so reason is its best support. In such a case, the nature of the thing, as well as the respect, that is due to the rank of the prince, would require us to be either mute, or modest, on the *motive;* and the same reasons would require us to consider the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the *law*, for if it be not reason, it ought not to be law; and nothing can prevent our feeling the good, or ill *effects* of the whole action.

To disfranchise and to banish, to imprison, and to execute, sometimes members of society are partial evils: but they are also some general benefits, and the excision of a part may be essential to the preservation of the whole. The inflicting of these punishments on the French protestants might possibly be essential to the safety of the whole nation: or perhaps his majesty might think it essential to monarchy: perhaps the clergy might think it essential to orthodoxy; perhaps the financiers, and the king's mistresses, might think it essential to the making of their fortunes; but we have nothing to do with these private views, the questions are, Was it essential to the general safety and happiness of the kingdom? Was it agreeable to the unalterable dictates of right reason? Was it consistent with the sound approved maxims of civil polity? In these views, we venture to say, that the repeal of the edict of Nantz, which had been the security of the protestants, was an action irrational and irreligious, inhuman and ungrateful, perfidious, impolitic and weak. If respect to religion and right reason, were to compose a just title for the perpetrators

perpetrator of such a crime, it might call him *a most inhuman tyrant*: certainly it would not call him *a most christian king.*

It was an *irrational* act, for there was no fitness between the punishment and the supposed crime. The crime was a mental error: but penal laws have no internal operation on the mind. It was *irreligious*, for religion ends where persecution begins. An action may begin in religion: but when it proceeds to injure a person it ceaseth to be religion, it is only a denomination, and a method of acting. It was *inhuman*, for it caused the most savage cruelties. It was as *ungrateful* in the house of Bourbon to murder their old supporters as it was magnanimous in the protestants, under their severest persecutions, to tell their murderer, they *thought that blood well employed, which had been spilt in supporting the just claim of the house of Bourbon, to the throne.* It was, to the last degree, *perfidious*, for the edict of Nantz had been given by Henry IV. for a PERPETUAL and IRREVOCABLE decree; it had been confirmed by the succeeding princes, and Lewis XIV. himself had assigned in the declaration the loyalty of the protestants as a reason of the confirmation: *My subjects of the pretended reformed religion*, says he, *have given me unquestionable proofs of their affection and loyalty.* It had been sworn to by the governors and lieutenants general of the provinces, by the courts of parliament, and by all the officers of the courts of justice. What national perjury! Is it enough to say as this perjured monarch did, *My grandfather Henry IV. loved you, and was obliged to you. My father, Lewis XIII. feared you, and wanted your assistance. But I neither love you, nor fear you; and do not want your services!* The *ill policy* of it is confessed on all sides. Where is the policy of banishing eight hundred thousand people, who declare that a free exercise of religion ought not to injure any man's civil rights, and, on this principle, support the king's claim to the crown, as long as he executes the duty of his office? Where is the policy of doing this in order to secure a set of men, who openly avow these propositions, *the Pope is superior to all law: It is right to kill that prince, whom the Pope excommunicates: if a prince become an Arian, the people ought to depose him?* Where is the policy of banishing men, whose doctrines have kept in the kingdom, during the space of two hundred and fifty years, the sum of two hundred and fifty millions of livres,

which, at a moderate calculation, would otherwise have gone to Rome for indulgences, and annates, and such other trash? Who was the politician, the Count d'Avaux, who, while he was ambassador in Holland, from 1685 to 1688, offered to prove that the refugees had carried out of France more than twenty millions of property, and advised the king to recal it, by recalling its owners? or the king, who refused to avail himself of this advice? Who was the politician, the intolerant Lewis, who drove his protestant soldiers and sailors out of his service; or the benevolent prince of Orange, who, in one year, raised three regiments of French refugee soldiers, commanded by their own officers, and manned three vessels, at the same time, with refugee sailors, to serve the Dutch, while France wanted men to equip her fleets? The protestants, having been for some time, excluded from all offices, and not being suffered to enjoy any civil or military employments, had applied themselves either to manufactures, or to the improving of their money in trade. Was it policy to banish a Mons. Vincent, who employed more than five hundred workmen? Was policy on the side of that prince, who demolished manufactories, or on the side of those who set them up, by receiving the refugee manufacturers into their kingdoms? Had England derived no more advantage from its hospitality to the refugees than the silk manufacture, 1698, it would have amply repaid the nation. The memorials of the intendants of the provinces were full of such complaints. The intendant of Rouen said, the refugees had carried away the manufacture of hats. The intendant of Poitiers said, they had taken away the manufacture of druggets. In some provinces the commerce was diminished several millions of livres in a year, and in some, half the revenue was sunk. Was it policy in the king to provoke the protestant states, and princes, who had always been his faithful allies against the house of Austria, and, at the same time, to supply them with eight hundred thousand new subjects? After all, it was a *weak* and foolish step, for the protestants were not extirpated. There remained almost as many in the kingdom as were driven out of it, and even at this day, though now and then a preacher hath been hanged, and now and then a family murdered, yet the opulent province of Languedoc is full of protestants, the Lutherans have the university of Alsace, neither art nor cruelty can rid the kingdom of them, and some of the greatest ornaments of France now plead for a FREE TOLERATION.

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The refugees charge their banishment on the *clergy* of France, and they give very good proof of their assertion, nor do they mistake, when they affirm that their sufferings are a part of the RELIGION of Rome, for Pope Innocent XI. highly approved of this persecution. He wrote a brief to the king, in which he assured him that what he had done against the heretics of his kingdom would be immortalized by the elogies of the catholic church. He delivered a discourse in the consistory, May 18, 1689, in which he said, *the most christian king's zeal, and* PIETY, *did wonderfully appear in extirpating heresy, and in clearing his whole kingdom of it in a very few months.* He ordered *Te Deum* to be sung, to give thanks to God for this return of the heretics into the pale of the church, which was accordingly done with great pomp, April 28. If this persecution were clerical policy, it was bad, and, if it were the religion of the French clergy, it was worse. In either case the church procured great evil to the state. Lewis XIV. was on the pinnacle of glory at the conclusion of the peace of Nimeguen, 1679, his dominion was, as it were, established all over Europe, and was become an inevitable prejudice to neighbouring nations: but here he began to extirpate heresy, and here he began to fall, nor has the nation ever recovered its grandeur since.

Protestant powers opened their arms to these venerable exiles. Abbadie, Ancillon, and others, fled to Berlin. Basnage, Claude, Du Bosc, and many more, found refuge in Holland. The famous Dr. Allix, with numbers of his brethren, came to England. A great many families went to Geneva, among which was that of Saurin.

Mr. Saurin, the father of our author, was an eminent protestant lawyer at Nismes, who, after the repeal of the edict of Nantz, 1685, retired to Geneva. He was considered at Geneva as the oracle of the French language, the nature and beauty of which he thoroughly understood. He had four sons, whom he trained up in learning, and who were also remarkably eloquent, that eloquence was said to be hereditary in the family. The Reverend Lewis Saurin, one of the sons, was afterwards pastor of a French church in London. Saurin, the father, died at Geneva. James, the author of the following sermons, was born at Nismes, in 1677, and went with his father into exile, to Geneva, where he profited very much in learning.

in the seventeenth year of his age, 1694, Saurin quitted his studies to go into the army, and made a campaign as a cadet in lord Galloway's company. The next year, 1695, his captain gave him a pair of colours in his regiment, which then served in Piedmont: but the year after, 1696, the Duke of Savoy, under whom Saurin served, having made his peace with France, Saurin quitted the profession of arms, for which he was never designed, and returned to Geneva to study.

Geneva was, at that time, the residence of some of th best scholars in Europe, who were in the highest estimation in the republic of letters. Pictet, Lewis Tronchin, and Philip Mestrezat, were professors of divinity there, Alphonso Turretin was professor of sacred history, and Chouet, who was afterwards taken from his professorship, and admitted into the government of the republic, was professor of natural philosophy. The other departments were filled with men, equally eminent in their several professions. Some of them were natives of Geneva, others were exiles from Italy and France, several were of noble families, and all of them were men of eminent piety. Under these great masters Saurin became a student, and particularly applied himself to divinity, as he now began to think of devoting himself to the ministry, 1696. To dedicate one's self to the ministry in a wealthy, flourishing church, where rich benefices are every day becoming vacant, requires very little virtue, and sometimes only a strong propensity to vice: but to choose to be a minister in such a poor, banished, persecuted church as that of the French protestants, argues a noble contempt of the world, and a supreme love to God, and to the souls of men. These are the best testimonials, however, of a young minister, whose profession is, not to enrich, but to *save himself, and them who hear him.* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

After Mr. Saurin had finished his studies 1700, he visited Holland and England. In the first he made a very short stay: but in the last he staid almost five years, and preached with great acceptance among his fellow exiles in London. Of his person an idea may be formed by the annexed copper-plate, which is said to be a great likeness, and for which I am indebted to my ingenious friend Mr. Thomas Holloway. His dress was that of the French clergy, the gown and cassock. His address was perfectly genteel, a happy compound of the affable and the grave, at an equal distance from rusticity and foppery. His voice was strong, clear, and harmonious, and he never lost the management of it.

His

His style was pure, unaffected, and eloquent, sometimes plain, and sometimes flowery: but never improper, as it was always adapted to the audience, for whose sake he spoke. An Italian acquaintance of mine, who often heard him at the Hague, tells me, that in the introductions of his sermons he used to deliver himself in a tone modest and low; in the body of the sermon which was adapted to the understanding, he was plain, clear, and argumentative, pausing at the close of each period, that he might discover, by the countenances and motions of his hearers, whether they were convinced by his reasoning; in his addresses to the wicked, (and it is a folly to preach as if there were none in our assemblies, Mr. Saurin knew mankind too well) he was often sonorous, but oftener a weeping suppliant at their feet. In the one he sustained the authoritative dignity of his office, in the other he expressed his master's, and his own benevolence to bad men, *praying them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. v. 20. In general, adds my friend, his preaching resembled a plentiful shower of dew, softly and imperceptibly insinuating itself into the minds of his numerous hearers, as the dew into the pores of plants, till the whole Church was dissolved, and all in tears under his sermons. His doctrine was that of the French protestants, which, at that time, was moderate calvinism. He approved of the discipline of his own churches, which was presbyterian. He was an admirable scholar, and, which were his highest encomiums, he had an unconquerable aversion to sin, a supreme love to God and to the souls of men, and a holy unblemished life. Certainly he had some faults: but, as I have never heard of any, I can publish none.

During his stay in England, he married a Miss Catherine Boyton, in 1703, by whom he had a son, named Philip, who survived him; but whether he had any more children I know not. Two years after his marriage he returned to Holland, in 1705, where he had a mind to settle: but, the pastoral offices being all full, and meeting with no prospect of a settlement, though his preaching was received with universal applause, he was preparing to return to England, when a chaplainship to some of the nobility at the Hague, with a stipend, was offered to him. This situation exactly suited his wishes, and he accepted the place.

The Hague, it is said, is the finest village in Europe. It is the residence of the States General, of ambassadors and envoys from other courts, of a great number of nobility and gentry,

gentry, and of a multitude of French refugees. The Princes of Orange have a spacious palace here, and the chapel of the palace was given to the refugees for a place of public worship, and, it being too small to contain them, it was enlarged by above a half. This French church called him to be one of their pastors. He accepted the call, and continued in his office till his death. He was constantly attended by a very crowded and brilliant audience, was heard with the utmost attention and pleasure, and, what few ministers can say, the effects of his ministerial labours were seen in the holy lives of great numbers of his people.

When the Princess of Wales, afterward Queen Caroline, passed through Holland in her way to England, Mr. Saurin had the honour of paying his respects to that illustrious lady. Her royal highness was pleased to single him out from the rest of the clergy, who were present, and to say to him, *Do not imagine that, being dazzled with the glory which this revolution seems to promise me, I have lost sight of that God, from whom it proceeds. He hath been pleased to distinguish it with so many extraordinary marks, that I cannot mistake his divine hand; and, as I consider this long train of favours as immediately coming from him, to him alone I consecrate them.* It is not astonishing, that Saurin speaks of condescension with rapture. They are the kind and christian actions of the governors of a free people, and not the haughty airs of a French tyrant, insulting his slaves, that attach and inflame the hearts of mankind. The history of this illustrious christian queen is not written in blood, and therefore it is always read with tears of grateful joy.

Her royal highness was so well satisfied of Mr Saurin's merit, that soon after her arrival in England she ordered Dr. Boulter, who was preceptor to Prince Frederick, the father of his present majesty, to write to Saurin, to draw up a treatise on the education of princes. Saurin immediately obeyed the order, and prefixed a dedication to the young princes. The book was never printed: but as it obtained the approbation of the Princess of Wales, who was an incomparable judge, we may conclude that it was excellent in its kind. This was followed by a handsome present from the princess to the author.

His most considerable work was intitled, *Discourses, historical, critical and moral, on the most memorable events of the old and new testament.* This work was undertaken by

by the desire of a Dutch merchant, who expended an immense sum in the engraving of a multitude of copper-plates, which adorn the work. It consists of six folio volumes. Mr Saurin died before the third was finished: but Mr Roques finished the third, and added a fourth on the old testament; and Mr. de Beausobre subjoined two on the new testament. The whole is replete with very extensive learning, and well worth the careful perusal of students in divinity. The first of these was translated into English by Chamberlayne, soon after its first publication in French.

Our author's *dissertation on the expedience of sometimes disguising the truth*, raised a furious clamour against him. He does not decide the question: but he seems to take the affirmative. This produced a paper war, and his antagonists unjustly censured his morals. The mildness of his disposition rendered him a desirable opponent, for though he was sure to conquer, yet he subdued his adversary so handsomely, that the captive was the better for his defeat. But others did not controvert with so much temper. Some wrote against him, others for him. At length the synod decided the dispute in his favour.

He published a small, but valuable piece *on the state of christianity in France*. It treats of many important points of religion, in controversy between catholics and protestants. There is also a small *catechism* of his publishing, which I think worth the attention of such as educate children in the first principles of religion.

There are twelve volumes of his sermons. Some are dedicated to his Majesty George II. and the king was pleased to allow him a handsome pension. Some to her Majesty Queen Caroline, while she was Princess of Wales. One to Count Wassanaer, a Dutch nobleman. Two were dedicated to her Majesty, after his decease, by his son. Professor Dumont, and Mr. Husson, to whom Mr. Saurin left his manuscripts, published the rest, and one volume is dedicated to the Countess Dowager of Albemarle. The English seem therefore to have a right to the labours of this great man.

Mr. Saurin died at the Hague on Dec. 30th, 1730, aged 53, most sincerely regretted by all his acquaintances, as well as by his church, who lost in him a truly primitive christian minister, who spent his life in watching over his flock, as one who knew he must give an account.

In regard to this translation, it was first undertaken by the desire of a small circle of private friends, for our mutual edification.

cation. If I have suffered my private opinion to be prevailed over by others to print this translation, it is not because I think myself able to give language to Saurin; but because I humbly hope that the sentiments of the author may be conveyed to the reader by it. His sentiments, I think, are, in general, those of the holy scripture, and his manner of treating them well adapted to impress them on the heart. I have endeavoured not to disguise his meaning, though I have not been able to adopt his style, for which defect, though I print them by private subscription, for the use of my friends, on whose candour I depend, yet I do not offer to publish them to the world for the language of Mr Saurin. I should have been glad to have pleased every subscriber, by inserting those sermons, which were most agreeable to him, had I known which they were: but as this was impossible, I have followed my own judgment, or perhaps exposed my want of it. The first volume aims to secure the doctrine of a *God*, against the attacks of atheists. In the second we mean to plead for the holy *scriptures* against deists. In the third, we intend to take those sermons, which treat of the *doctrines of christianity*, as we humbly conceive that the new testament is something more than a system of moral philosophy. And the last volume we dedicate to *moral* subjects, because we think christianity a holy religion, productive of moral obedience in all its true disciples. To this second edition a *fifth* volume is added on miscellaneous subjects. May the God of all grace bless the reading of them to the weakening of the dominion of sin, and to the advancement of the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

SERMONS

CONTENTS

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

SERMON I.

The Perfection of Christian Knowledge.

HEB. v. 12, 13, 14.—vi. 1, 2, 3.

Page 41

SERMON II.

The Eternity of God.

2 PETER iii. 8.

Page 63

SERMON III.

The Omnipotence of God.

PSALM cxxxix. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Page ..... 83.

SERMON IV.

The Grandeur of God.

ISAIAH xl. 12 to 28.

Page 105

SERMON V.

The Greatness of God's Wisdom and the Abundance of his Power.

JEREMIAH xxxii. 19.

Page 123

SERMON VI.

The Holiness of God.

LEVITICUS xix. 1, 2.

Page 145

SERMON VII.

The Compassion of God.

PSALM ciii. 13.

Page 163

SERMON VIII.

The Incomprehensibility of the Mercy of God.

ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

Page 183

SERMON IX.

The Severity of God.

HEBREWS xii. 29.

Page 210

SERMON X.

The Patience of God with wicked Nations.

GENESIS xv. 16.

Page 217

SERMON XI.

The Long-suffering of God with Individuals.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11, 12.

Page 233

SERMON XII.

God the only Object of Fear.—Part I.

JEREMIAH x. 7.

Page 147

SERMON XIII.

Ibid.—Part II.

JEREMIAH x. 7.

Page 261

SERMON XIV.

The Manner of praising God.

PSALM xxxiii. 1.

Page 273

SERMON

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

HEB. v. 12, 13, 14.---vi. 1, 2, 3.

For when for the time you ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.---Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION, *not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit.*

I Have put two subjects together which are closely connected, and I intend to explain both in this discourse. The last part of the text is a consequence of the first. In the first, St. Paul reproves some christians for their little knowledge; in the last, he exhorts them to increase it: and the connection of both will appear, if you attend to the subject under his consideration. The epistle to the Hebrews, which may be considered as the apostle's principal work, treats of the most difficult points of divinity and morality. In particular, this is the idea that must be formed of Melchisedec's priesthood, as a prefiguration of Jesus Christ's. This mysterious

rious subject the Apostle had begun to discuss, but he had not proceeded far in it before he found himself at a stand, by recollecting the character of those to whom he was writing. He describes them, in the text, as men who were grown old in the profession of christianity indeed, but who knew nothing more of it than its first principles; and he endeavours to animate them with the laudable ambition of penetrating the noblest parts of that excellent system of religion, which Jesus Christ had published, and which his apostles had explained in all its beauty, and in all its extent.

This general notion of St Paul's design, in the words of my text, is the best comment on his meaning, and the best explication we can give, of his terms.

By *the first principles of the oracles of God*, to which the Hebrews confined themselves, the apostle means the rudiments of that science of which God is the object; that is, christian divinity and morality; and these rudiments are here also called *the principles of Christ**, that is, the first principles of that doctrine which Jesus Christ taught. These are compared to *milk*, which is given to children incapable of digesting *strong meat;* and they are opposed to the profound knowledge of those who have been habituated by long exercise to study and meditation, or, as the apostle expresseth it, *who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

In this class St. Paul places, first, *repentance from dead works, and faith towards God.* These were the first truths, which the heralds of the gospel preached to their hearers: to them they said, *Repent, and believe the gospel.*

St. Paul places in the same class, secondly, the doctrine of *baptisms*, that is, the confession of faith that was required of such as had resolved to profess christianity and to be baptized. Of such persons a confession was required, and their answers to certain questions were demanded. The formularies, that have been used on this occasion, have been extremely diversified at different places and in different times, but the most ancient are the shortest, and the most determinate. One question, that was put to the catechumen, was, *Dost thou renounce the devil?* to which he answered, *I renounce him.* Another was, *Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ?* to which he replied, *I believe in him.* St. Cyprian calls these questions

* τηϛ αρχηϛ του χριϛου λογοϛ.

tions *the baptismal interrogatory;* and the answers are called by Tertullian *the answer of salvation*. and we have a passage upon this article in an author still more respectable, I mean St. Peter, who says, *Baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,* 1 Epist. iii. 21. that is, the answer which was given by the catechumen before his baptism.

Thirdly, Among the rudiments or first principles of christianity, St. Paul puts *the laying on of hands,* by which we understand the gift of miracles, which the apostles communicated by imposition of hands to those who embraced the gospel. We have several instances of this in scripture, and a particular account of it in the eighth chapter of Acts. It is there said, that Philip, having undeceived many of the Samaritans, whom Simon the sorcerer *had of a long time bewitched baptized both men and women,* ver. 11, 12, 14, 17. and that the apostles, Peter and John, *laid their hands on them,* and by that ceremony communicated to them the gift of the holy Ghost.

The resurrection of the dead, and *eternal judgment,* are two other articles which St. Paul places in the same class: Articles believed by the weakest christians, received by the greatest part of the Jews, and admitted by even many of the heathens. Now the apostle wishes that the Hebrews, *leaving these principles,* would aspire to be *perfect. Let us go on unto perfection,* says he, let us proceed from the catechumen state to a thorough acquaintance with that religion, which is *wisdom among them that are perfect;* that is, a system of doctrine which cannot be well understood by any except by such as the heathens call *perfect.* They denominated those *perfect,* who did not rest in a superficial knowledge of a science, but who endeavoured thoroughly to understand the whole. This was the design of St. Paul in writing to the Hebrews: and this is ours in addressing you.

We will endeavour, first, to give you as exact and adequate a notion as we can of christian divinity and morality, and from thence to infer, that you can neither see the beauty, nor reap the benefit of either of them, while you confine yourselves, as most of you do, to a few loose principles, and continue unacquainted with the whole system or body of religion.

Secondly, We will inquire, why so many of us do confine

our attention to these first truths, and never proceed to the rest.

Lastly, We will give you some directions how to increase your knowledge, and to attain that *perfection*, to which St. Paul endeavoured to conduct the Hebrews. This is the whole we propose to treat of in this discourse.

I. It is evident from the nature of Christianity, that you can neither see its beauties, nor reap its benefits, while you attend only to some loose principles, and do not consider the whole system: for the truths of religion form a system, a body of coherent doctrines, closely connected, and in perfect harmony. Nothing better distinguisheth the accurate judgment of an orator, or a philosopher, than the connection of his orations or systems. Unconnected systems, orations, in which the author is determined only by caprice and chance, as it were, to place the proposition which follows after that which precedes, and that which precedes before that which follows; such orations and systems are less worthy of rational beings, than of creatures destitute of intelligence, whom nature has formed capable of uttering sounds indeed, but not of forming ideas. Orations and systems should be connected; each part should occupy the place, which order and accuracy, not caprice and chance, assign it. They should resemble buildings constructed according to the rules of art; the laws of which are never arbitrary, but fixed and inviolable, founded on the nature of regularity and proportion: or, to use St. Paul's expresion, each should be *a body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth*, Eph. iv. 16.

Let us apply this to the subject in hand. Nothing better proves the divinity of religion, than the connection, the harmony, the agreement of its component parts. I am aware that this grand characteristic of christianity hath occasioned many mistakes among mankind. Under pretence that a religion proceeding from God must harmonize in its component parts, men have licentiously contrived a chain of propositions to please themselves. They have substituted a phantom of their own imagination, for that body of doctrine which God hath given us in the holy scriptures—Hence so much obstinacy in maintaining, after so much rashness and presumption in advancing such phantoms. For, my brethren, of all obstinate people, none excel more in their dreadful kind, than those who are prejudiced in favour of certain systems. A man who does not think himself capable of forming a connected

sected system, can bear contradiction, because, if he be obliged to give up some of the propositions which he hath advanced, some others which he embraces will not be disputed, and what remain may indemnify him for what he surrenders. But a man prepossessed with an imaginary system of his own has seldom so much teachableness. He knows, that if one link be taken away his chain falls to pieces; and that there is no removing a single stone from his building without destroying the whole edifice: he considers the upper skins which covered the tabernacle, as typical as the ark in the holy place, or the mercy-seat itself. The staff, with which Jacob passed over the Euphrates, and of which he said *with my staff I passed over this river*, seems to him as much designed by the Spirit of God to typify the cross on which Jesus Christ redeemed the church, as the serpent of brass which was lifted up in the desart by the express command of God himself.

But if infatuation with systems hath occasioned so many disorders in the church, the opposite disposition, I mean, the obstinate rejection of all, or the careless composition of some, hath been equally hurtful: for it is no less dangerous, in a system of religion, to omit what really belongs to it, than to incorporate any thing foreign from it.

Let us be more explicit. There are two sorts of truths in religion; truths of speculation, and truths of practice. Each truth is connected not only with other truths in its own class, but truths of the first class are connected with those of the second, and of these parts thus united is composed that admirable body of doctrine which forms the system of religion.

There are in religion some truths of speculation, there is a chain of doctrines. God is holy: this is the first truth. A holy God can have no intimate communion with unholy creatures: this is a second truth which follows from the first. God, who can have no communion with unholy creatures, can have no communion with men who are unholy creatures: this is a third truth which follows from the second. Men, who are unholy creatures, being incapable as such of communion with the happy God, must on that very account be entirely miserable: this is a fourth truth which follows from the third. Men, who must be absolutely miserable, because they can have no communion with the holy, happy God, become objects of the compassion of that God, who is as loving and merciful as he is happy and holy: this is a fifth truth which follows from the fourth. This loving and merciful God is naturally

naturally inclined to relieve a multitude of his creatures, who are ready to be plunged into the deepest miseries: this is a sixth truth which follows from the fifth.

Thus follow the thread of Jesus Christ's theology, and you will find, as I said, each part that composeth it depending on another, and every one giving another the hand. For, from the loving and merciful inclination of God to relieve a multitude of his creatures from a threatening abyss of the deepest miseries, follows the mission of Jesus Christ; because it was fit that the remedy chosen of God to relieve the miseries of men should bear a proportion to the causes which produced it. From the doctrine of Jesus Christ's mission follows the necessity of the spirit of God: because it would have been impossible for men to have discovered by their own speculations the way of salvation, unless they had been assisted by a supernatural revelation, according to that saying, *Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit*, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. From the doctrines of the mission of the Son of God, and of the gift of the holy Spirit, follows this most comfortable truth, that we are the objects of the love of God, even of love the most vehement and sincere that can be imagined: for *God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. And, as we are objects of that love which God hath commended to us in his Son, it follows, that no bounds can be set to our happiness, that there is no treasure too rich in the mines of *the blessed God*, no duration too long in eternity, no communion with the Creator too close, too intimate, too tender, which we have not a right to expect; according to that comfortable, that extatic maxim of St Paul: God, who *spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

This is a chain of some truths of the gospel. We do not say it might not be lengthened; we no not pretend to have given a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel; we only say that the doctrines proposed are closely connected, and that one produceth another in a system of speculative gospel truths.

In like manner, there is a connection between practical truths. The class of practical truths is connected with the class of speculative truths, and each practical truth is connected with another practical truth.

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The class of practical truths is connected with the class of speculative truths. As soon as ever we are convinced of the truth of the doctrines just now mentioned, we shall be thereby convinced that we are under an indispensible necessity to devote ourselves to holiness. People, who draw consequences from our doctrines injurious to morality, fall into the most gross and palpable of all contradictions. The single doctrine of Jesus Christ's mission naturally produceth the necessity of sanctification. You believe that the love of holiness is so essential to God, that rather than pardon criminals without punishing their crimes, he hath punished his own Son. And can you believe that the God, to whom holiness is so essential, will bear with you while you make no efforts to be holy? Do you not see that in this supposition you imagine a contradictory God, or rather, that you contradict yourselves? In the first supposition, you conceive a God to whom sin is infinitely odious: in the second, a God to whom sin is infinitely tolerable. In the first supposition, you conceive a God, who, by the holiness of his nature, exacts a satisfaction: in the second, you conceive a God, who, by the indifference of his nature, loves the sinner while he derives no motives from the satisfaction to forsake his sin. In the first supposition, you imagine a God who opposeth the strongest barriers against vice; in the second, you imagine a God who removeth every obstacle to vice: nothing being more likely to confirm men in sin than an imagination, that, to what length soever they go, they may always find, in the sacrifice of the Son of God, an infallible way of avoiding the punishment due to their sin, whenever they shall have recourse to that sacrifice. Were it necessary to enlarge this article, and to take one doctrine after another, you would see that every doctrine of religion proves what we have advanced concerning the natural connection of religious speculative truths with truths of practice.

But, if practical truths of religion are connected with speculative truths, each of the truths of practice is also closely connected with another. All virtues mutually support each other, and there is no invalidating one part of our morality, without, on that very account, invalidating the whole.

In our treatises of morality, we have usually assigned three objects to our virtues. The first of these objects is God: the second is our neighbour: and the third ourselves. St. Paul is the author of this division. *The grace of God, that*

that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus ii. 11, 12. But all these are connected together: for we cannot live *godly* without living at the same time *righteously* and *soberly:* because to live *godly* is to perform what religion appoints, and to take that perfect Being for our example, to whom religion conducts and unites us. Now to live as religion appoints, to take that perfect Being for our pattern, to whom religion conducts and unites us, is to live *righteously* with our neighbour, and *soberly* ourselves. Strictly speaking, we have not one virtue unless we have all virtues; nor are we free from one vice unless we be free from all vices: we are not truly charitable unless we be truly just, nor are we truly just, unless we be truly charitable: we are not truly liberal but as we avoid profuseness, nor are we truly frugal but as we avoid avarice. As I said before, all virtues naturally follow one another, and afford each other a mutual support.

Such is the chain of religious truths: such is the connection, not only of each truth of speculation with another truth of speculation, but of speculative truths with the truths of practice. There is then a concatenation, an harmony, a connection in the truths of religion: there is a system, a body of doctrine in the gospel. This is the article we proposed to prove.

But a religion, in which there is such a chain, such an harmony and connection, a body of doctrine so systematically compacted and united, ought not to be taken by bits and parts.

To illustrate this we may compare spiritual with natural things. The more art and ingenuity there is in a machine composed of divers wheels, the more necessary it is to consider it in its whole, and in all its arrangements, and the more does its beauty escape our observation when we confine our attention to a single wheel: because the more art there is in a machine the more essential is the minutest part to its perfection. Now deprive a machine of an essential part and you deface and destroy it.

Apply this to spiritual things. In a compact system, in a coherent body of doctrine, there is nothing useless, nothing which ought not to occupy the very place that the genius who composed the whole hath given it. What will become of religion if we consider any of its doctrines separately?

rately? What becomes of religion if we consider the holiness of God without his justice, or his justice without his mercy?

II. Let us then proceed to inquire why so many of us confine ourselves to a small number of religious truths, and incapacitate ourselves for examining the whole system. The fact is too certain. Hence, our preachers seem to lead us in obscure paths, and to lose us in abstract speculations, when they treat of some of the attributes of God, such as his faithfulness, his love of order, his regard for his intelligent creatures. It is owing to this that we are, in some sense, well acquainted with some truths of religion, while we remain entirely ignorant of others, which are equally plain, and equally important. Hence it is that the greatest part of our sermons produce so little fruit, because sermons are, at least they ought to be, connected discourses, in which the principle founds the consequence, and the consequence follows the principle; all which supposes in the hearers an habit of meditation and attention. For the same reason we are apt to be offended when any body attempts to draw us out of the sphere of our prejudices, and are not only ignorant, but, (if you will pardon the expression) ignorant with gravity, and derive I know not what glory from our own stupidity. Hence it is, that a preacher is seldom or never allowed to soar in his sermons, to rise into the contemplation of some lofty and rapturous objects, but must always descend to the *first principles* of religion, as if he preached for the first time, or as if his auditors for the first time heard. Hence also it is that some doctrines, which are true in themselves, demonstrated in our scriptures, and essential to religion, become errors, yea sources of many errors in our mouths, because we consider them only in themselves, and not in connection with other doctrines, or in the proper places to which they belong in the system of religion. This might be easily proved in regard to the doctrines of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of the cross, the necessity of the holy Spirit's assistance: doctrines true, demonstrated, and essential; but doctrines which will precipitate us from one abyss to another, if we consider them as some people too often consider them, and as they have been too often considered in the schools, in an abstract and detached manner. The fact then is too certain. Let us attend to the principal causes of it.

Four principal causes may be assigned: 1. A party spirit. 2. A choice of teachers. 3. A hurry of business. Above all: 4. A love of pleasure. As we shall take the liberty of pointing out the causes of this malady, we shall also prescribe the remedy, whether our most humble remonstrances regard the people, the pastors, or even the magistrates, whose noblest office, as well as most sacred and inviolable duty, it is to watch for the support of the truth, and the government of the church.

1. The first cause we have assigned is *A party-spirit.* This is a disposition that cannot be easily defined, and it would be difficult to include in a definition of it even its genus and species: It is a monstrous composition of all bad genuses and of all bad species: It is an hydra that re-produceth while it seemeth to destroy itself, and which, when one head hath been cut off, instantly produceth a thousand more. Sometimes it is superstition, which inclines us to deify certain idols, and, after having formed, to prostrate ourselves first before them. Sometimes it is ignorance, which prevents our perceiving the importance of some revealed truths, or the dreadful consequences of some prejudices, which, we had embraced in childhood. Sometimes it is arrogance, which rashly maintains whatever it hath once advanced; advanced perhaps at first inconsiderately, but which will afterwards be resolutely defended till death, for no other reason but because it hath been once asserted, and because it is too mortifying to yield and say *I am wrong, I was mistaken.* Sometimes it is a spirit of malice and barbarity, which abhors, exclaims against, persecutes, and would even exterminate all who dare contradict its oracular propositions. Oftener still it is the union of all these vices together. A party-spirit is that disposition which invenoms so many hearts, separates so many families, divides so many societies, which hath produced so many excommunications, thundered out so many anathemas, drawn up so many canons, assembled so many councils, and hath been so often on the point of subverting the great work of the reformation, the noblest opposition that was ever formed against it.

This spirit, which we have faintly described, must naturally incapacitate a man for considering the whole of religion: it must naturally incline him to take only by bits and shreds. On the one hand, it contracts the mind: for how can a soul that

that harboureth and cherisheth all the phantoms which a party-spirit produceth, how can such a soul study and meditate as religion requires? On the other hand, a party-spirit depraves the heart and eradicates the desire of knowing religion. A man animated with the spirit of party directeth all his attention to such propositions of religion as seem to favour his erroneous opinions, and irregular passions, and diverts it from all that oppose them: his system includes only what strengthens his party, it is exclusive of every thing that weakens or opposes it.

This is the first cause of the malady. The remedy is easily discovered. Let us divest ourselves of a party-spirit. Let us never determine an opinion by its agreement or disagreement with what our masters, our parents, or our teachers have inculcated, but by its conformity or contrariety to the doctrine of Jesus Christ and his apostles. Let us never receive or reject a maxim because it favours or opposes our passions, but because it agrees with or opposes the laws of that tribunal, the basis of which are justice and truth. Let us be fully convinced that our chief study should be to know what God determines, and to make his commands the only rules of our knowledge and practice.

2. The second cause of the evil, that we would remove, is, *A choice of teachers.* In general, we have three sorts of teachers. The first are catechists, who teach our children the principles of religion. The second are ministers. The third prepare the minds of young people for the ministry itself.

The carelessness, that prevails in our choice of the first sort of teachers, cannot be sufficiently lamented. The care of instructing our children is committed to people more fit for disciples than masters, and the meanest talents are thought more than sufficient to teach the first principles of religion. The narrowest and dullest genius is not ashamed to profess himself a divine and a catechist. And yet what capacity does it not require to lay the first foundations of the edifice of Salvation! What address to take the different forms necessary to insinuate into the minds of catechumens, and to conciliate their attention and love! What dexterity to proportion instruction to the different ages and characters of learners! How much knowledge, and how many accomplishments are necessary to discern what is fundamental to a child of twelve, and what is fundamental to a youth of fifteen years of age! What one child of superior talents cannot be ignorant of without danger, and what another of in-

ferior talents may remain innocently unacquainted with! Heads of families, this article concerns you in a particular manner. What account can you render to God of the children with whom he hath intrusted you, if, while you take so much pains, and are at so much expence to teach them the liberal arts, and to acquaint them with human sciences, you discover so much negligence in teaching them the knowledge of salvation? Not only in a future state ought you to fear the punishment of so criminal a conduct; you will be punished in this present world. Children ignorant of religion will but little understand their duty to their parents. They will become the cross, as they will be the shame and infamy of your life. They will shake off your yoke as soon as they have passed their childhood, they will abandon you to the weaknesses, infirmities, and disquietudes of old age, when you arrive at that distasteful period of life, which can be rendered agreeable only by the care, the tenderness, and assiduity of a well bred son. Let us unite all our endeavours, my dear brethren, to remove this evil. Let us honour an employment, which nothing but the licentiousness of the age could have rendered contemptible. Let us consider that, as one of the most important trusts of the state, one of the most respectable posts of society, which is appointed to seminate religious principles in our children, to inspire them with piety, to guard them against the snares that they will meet with in the world, and, by these means, to render them dutiful in childhood, faithful in conjugal life, tender parents, good citizens, and able magistrates.

The pastors of our churches make a second class of teachers. I know, that all *our sufficiency is of God:* 2 Cor. iii. 5. that, though Paul may plant, and Apollos water, *God* only *giveth the increase;* that holy men, considering the end of the ministry, have exclaimed, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 1 Cor. iii. 6. Yet, the ordinary means, which God useth for the conversion of sinners, are the ministry of the word, and the qualifications of ministers, for *faith cometh by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. Now this word, my brethren, is not preached with equal power by all; and, though the *foundation* which each lays be the same, it is too true that some *build upon this foundation* the *gold and precious stones* of a solid and holy doctrine, while others build with the *wood, hay, and stubble*, 1 Cor. iii. 12. of their own errors, the productions of a confused imagination and a mistaken eloquence. And as the word is not preached with

with the same power, so it is not attended with the same success.

But when the word proceeds from the mouth of a man whom God hath sealed, and enriched with extraordinary talents, when it proceeds from a man, who hath *the tongue of the learned* and *the wisdom of the wise*, as the scripture speaks: Isa. l. 4. when it proceeds from a *Boanerges*, Mark iii. 17. a son of thunder, from a Moses, *mighty in words and in deeds*, Acts vii. 22. who maintains the dignity of his doctrine by the purity of his morals, and by the power of his good example, then the word is heard with attention; from the ear it passeth to the mind, from the mind to the heart, from the heart to the life: it penetrates, it inflames, it transports. It becomes *a hammer* breaking the hardest hearts, a *a two-edged sword*, dividing the father from the son, the son from the father, dissolving all the bonds of flesh and blood, the connections of nature, and the love of self.

What precaution, what circumspection, and in some sort, what dread ought to prevail in the choice of an office, which so greatly influences the salvation of those among whom it is exercised! There needs only the bad system of a pastor to produce and preserve thousands of false notions of religion in the people's minds: notions which fifty years labour of a more wise and sensible ministry will scarcely be able to eradicate. There needs only a pastor sold to sordid interest, to put up, in some sort, salvation to sale, and to regulate places in paradise according to the diligence or negligence with which the people gratify the avarice of him who distributes them. There needs only a pastor fretted with envy and jealousy against his brethren to poison their ministry, by himself, or by his emissaries. Yea sometimes, there needs only the want of some less essential talents in a minister to give advantage to the enemies of religion, and to deprive the truths he preaches of that profound respect which is their due; a respect that even enemies could not withhold, if the gospel were properly preached and its truths exhibited in their true point of view.

It would be unreasonable perhaps to develope this article now. How many of our people would felicitate themselves if we were to furnish them with pretences for imputing their unfruitfulness to those who cultivate them! But, if this article must not be developed, what grave remonstrances, what pressing exhortations, what fervent prayers should it occasion; Let the heads of families consider the heinousness

ness of their conduct in presuming to offer impure victims to the Lord, and in consecrating those children to the holy ministry, in whom they cannot but discover dispositions that render them unworthy of it. May ecclesiastical bodies never assemble for the elections of pastors without making profound reflections on the importance of the service in which they are engaged, and the greatness of the trust which the magistrate commits to them: May they never ordain without recollecting, that, to a certain degree, they will be responsible for all the sad consequences of a faithless or a fruitless ministry: May they always prostrate themselves, on these occasions, before God, as the apostles in the same case did, and pray, *Lord shew whom thou hast chosen* Acts i. 24. May our rulers and magistrates be affected with the worth of those souls, whom pastors instruct; and may they unite all their piety, all their pity, and all their power to procure holy men, who may adorn so eminent, so venerable a post.

What hath been said on the choice of pastors still more particularly regards the election of tutors, who are employed to form pastors themselves. Universities are public springs, whence rivulets flow into all the church. Place at the head of these bodies sound philosophers, good divines, wise casuists, and they will become seminaries of *pastors after God's heart*, who will form the minds, and regulate the morals of the people, gently bowing them to the yoke of religion. On the contrary, place men of another character at the head of our universities, and they will send out impoisoned ministers, who will diffuse through the whole church the fatal venom which they themselves have imbibed.

3. The third cause, which we have assigned, of the infancy and noviciate of most christians in religious knowledge, is *the multitude of their secular affairs.* Far be it from us to aim at inspiring you with superstitious maxims. We do not mean that they who fill eminent posts in society shall devote that time to devotion, which the good of the community requires. We allow, that, in some critical conjunctures, the time appointed for devotion must be yielded to business. There are some urgent occasions when it is more necessary to fight than to pray: there are times of important business in which the closet must be sacrificed to the cares of life, and second causes must be attended to even when one would wish to be occupied only about the first.

Yet,

Yet, after all, the duty we recommend is indispensable. Amidst the most turbulent solicitudes of life, a christian, desirous of being saved, will devote some time to his salvation. Some part of the day he will redeem from the world and society, to meditate on eternity. This was the practice of those eminent saints, whose lives are proposed as patterns to us. The histories of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and David are well known, and you recollect those parts of their lives to which we refer, without our detaining you in a repetition now.

The last cause of the incapacity of so many christians for seeing the whole of religion in its connection and harmony, the last cause of their taking it only by bits and shreds, is their love of sensual pleasure. We do not speak here of those gross pleasures, at which heathens would have blushed, and which are incompatible with christianity. We attack pleasures more refined, maxims for which reasonable persons become sometimes apologists: persons who, on more accounts than one, are worthy of being proposed as examples: persons who would seem to be *the salt of the earth*, the flower of society, and whom we cannot justly accuse of not loving religion. How rational, how religious soever they appear in other cases, they make no scruple of passing a great part of their time in gaming, in public diversions, in a round of worldly amusements; in pleasures, which not only appear harmless, but, in some sort suitable to their rank, and which seem criminal only to those, who think it their duty not to float on the surface of religion, but to examine the whole that it requires of those men, on whom God hath bestowed the inestimable favour of revealing it. We may presume, that, if we shew people of this sort, that this way of life is one of the principal obstacles to their progress in religion, and prevents their knowing all its beauties, and relishing all its delights, we shall not speak without success. In order to this, pardon me if I conjure you to hear this article, not only with attention, but with that impartiality, which alone can enable you to know whether we utter our own speculations, or preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Recollect here that general notion of religion which we have laid down: it contains truths of speculation, and truths of practice. Such sensual pleasures as we have just now mentioned, form invincible obstacles to the knowledge of both.

I. To the knowledge of *speculative* truths. How is it possible

possible for a man to obtain a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel while he is a slave to sensual pleasures?

1. To obtain a complete system of the doctrines of the gospel, there must be a certain habit of thinking and meditating. In vain you turn over whole volumes, in vain you attend methodical sermons, in vain you make a parade with bodies of divinity, you can never comprehend the connexion of religious truths unless you acquire a habit of arranging ideas, of laying down principles, of deducing consequences, in short of forming systems yourselves. This habit cannot be acquired without exercise; it is unattainable without serious attention, and profound application. But how can people devoted to pleasure acquire such a habit? Sensual pleasure is an inexhaustible source of dissipation: it dissipates in preparing, it dissipates in studying, it dissipates after the study is at an end.

2. To counterbalance the difficulty of meditation and study there must be a relish for it. Those who make study a duty or a trade, seldom make any great progress in knowledge: at least, a great difference has always been observed between the proficiency of those who study by inclination, and those who study by necessity. But nothing is more capable of disgusting us with the spiritual pleasures of study and meditation than the love of sensual pleasures. We will not intrude into the closets of these persons; but is there not a remarkable difference between their application to study and their attention to pleasure? The one is a violence offered to themselves, the other a voluptuousness after which they sigh. The one is an intolerable burden eagerly shaken off as soon as the time appointed expires: the other is a delicious gratification, from which it is painful to part when nature exhausted can support it no longer, or troublesome duty demands a cessation. In the one, hours and moments are counted, and the happiest period is that which terminates the pursuit: but in the other, time glides away imperceptibly, and people wish for the power of prolonging the course of the day, and the duration of life.

3. To acquire a complete knowledge of religious truths, it is not enough to study them in the closet, in retirement and silence; we must converse with others who study them too. But the love of sensual pleasure indisposes us for such conversations. Slaves to sensual pleasures have but little taste for those delicious societies, whose mutual bond is utility; in which impartial inquirers propose their doubts, raise their objections,

objections, communicate their discoveries, and reciprocally assist each other's edification: for deprive those who love sensual pleasures, of gaming and diversions, conversation instantly languishes, and converse is at an end.

But, secondly, if the love of sensual pleasure raise such great obstacles to the knowledge of speculative truths, it raiseth incomparably greater still to the truths of *practice*. There are some scripture maxims, which are never thought of by the persons in question, except it be to enervate and destroy them, at least, they make no part of their system of morality.

In your system of morality, what becomes of this scripture-maxim, *evil communications corrupt good manners?* 1 Cor. xv. 33. Nothing forms connections more intimate, and, at the same time, more extravagant, than an immoderate love of pleasure. Men, who differ in manners, age, religion, birth, principles, education, are all united by this bond. The passionate and the moderate, the generous and the avaricious, the young and the old agree to exercise a mutual condescension and patience towards each other, because the same spirit actuates, and the same necessities haunt them; and because the love of pleasure, which animates them all, can only be gratified by the concurrence of each individual.

In your system of morality, what become of those maxims of scripture, which say that we must *confess Jesus Christ before men:* that *whosoever shall be ashamed of him before men, of him will he be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father?* Matt. x. 32. Mark. viii. 38. A man, who is engaged in the monstrous assembly which the love of pleasure forms, must hear religion disputed, the morality of the gospel attacked, good manners subverted, the name of God blasphemed: and he must hear all these without daring to discover the sentiments of his heart, because as I just now observed, patience and compliance animate that body to which he is attached by such necessary and intimate ties.

In your system of morality, what become of such scripture-maxims as threaten those with the greatest punishments who injure others? The love of sensual pleasure causeth offences of this, the most odious kind; I mean, it betrays your partners in pleasure into vice. You game without avarice; but do you not excite avarice in the minds of those who play with you; You do not injure your families; but do you not

occasion other men to injure theirs? You are guilty of no fraud? but do you not tempt others to be fraudulent?

What become, in your moral system, of those maxims of scripture that require us to contribute to the excision of *all wicked doers from the city of the Lord*, Psal. ci. 8. to discountenance those who commit a crime as well as to renounce it ourselves? The love of sensual pleasure makes us countenance people of the most irregular conduct, whose snares are the most dangerous, whose examples are the most fatal, whose conversations are the most pernicious to our children and to our families, to civil society and to the church of God.

In your system of morality what become of those maxims of scripture, which expostulate with us when the Lord chastiseth us, to *be afflicted and mourn*, James iv. 9. to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God*; 1 Pet. v. 6. *to enter into our chambers, and shut the doors about us, to hide ourselves until the indignation be overpast*, Isai. xxvi. 20. *to examine ourselves before the decree bring forth*, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. to *prepare* ourselves *to meet our God*, Amos, iv. 12. to *hear the rod and who hath appointed it*, Micah. vi. 9. to mourn in sackcloth and ashes; and, while we feel present miseries, to remember those that are past, tremble for those that are to come, and endeavour by extraordinary efforts to avert the anger of heaven? The love of sensual pleasure turns away people's attention from all these maxims, and represents those who preach them as wild visionaries, or dry declaimers. The people of whom we speak, these pious people, these people, who love their salvation, these people, who pretend to the glory of being proposed for examples, can, in times of the deepest distress, when the church is bathed in tears, while the arm of God is crushing our brethren and our allies, when the same terrible arm is lifted over us, when we are threatened with extreme miseries, when the scourges of God are at our gates, when there needs only the arrival of one ship, the blowing of one wind, the wafting of one blast, to convey pestilence and plague into our country; these people can . . . . . O God! *open their eyes that they may see!* 2 Kings vi. 17.

In your system of morality, what become of scripture exhortations to *redeem the time*, to know *the time of our visitation*, to do *all that our hands find to do, because there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave*

grave whither we go? The love of pleasure inclines mortals, who may die in a few days, people, who perhaps have only a few days to bid their last adieus, to embrace their families, to settle their temporal affairs, to examine the neglected parts of religion, to re-establish the injured reputation of a neighbour, in a word, to prepare themselves to appear before that terrible tribunal to which death cites them: the love of sensual pleasure inclines these poor creatures, who have so short a time to live and so great a task to perform; the love of sensual pleasure inclines these people to waste a considerable part of this fleeting life in amusements, that obliterate both the shortness of life, and the necessity of death.

How often have we seen old age as greedy of pleasure as youth! how often have we seen people bowing under the weight of age, how often have we seen them, even when their trembling hands could scarcely hold the cards, or the dice, make their feeble efforts to game; and, when their decayed eyes were incapable of distinguishing the spots, assist nature by art, their natural sight with artificial glasses, and thus consecrate the remains, those precious remains, of life to gaming, which God had granted for repentance!

All these causes, of the infancy and noviciate of christians in regard to religion, unite in one, which, in finishing this discourse, we cannot but lament, nor can we lament it too much. We do not understand our own religion: we are, most of us, incapable of perceiving the admirable order, the beautiful symmetry of its competent parts. Why? It is because we have so little zeal for our salvation; it is because we form such languid desires to be saved. Indeed I know, that, except some few unnatural creatures, except some monsters, to whom this discourse is not addressed, every body professes to desire to be saved, yea, to prefer salvation before whatever is most pompous in the universe, and most pleasant in this life. But, when the attainment of it in God's way is in question, in the only way that agrees with the holiness of his nature to direct, and with our happiness to obey, what a number of people do we meet with whose desires vanish? I desire to be saved, says each to himself, I desire to be saved, but not by such a religion as the gospel prescribes, such as Jesus Christ preached, such as the apostles and ministers of the gospel preach after him: but I desire to be saved by such a religion as I have conceived, such an one as gratifies my passions and caprices. I desire to be saved, but it is on condition, that, while I obey some of the precepts

of Jesus Christ, he will dispense with my obedience of others. I desire to be saved: not on condition of my correcting my prejudices, and submitting them to the precepts of Jesus Christ, but on condition that the precepts of Jesus Christ yield to my prejudices. I desire to be saved: but on condition of retaining my prepossessions, the system I have arranged, the way of life I pursue, and intend to pursue till I die. To desire salvation in this manner is too common a disposition among christians. But to desire salvation in saying to God, with a sincere intention to obey his voice, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to believe? Lord, what wilt thou have me to love? Lord, what inclinations wilt thou have me to oppose, to mortify, to sacrifice? To be willing to be saved in receiving, without exception, all the practical truths, which compose an essential part of that religion, which God hath given us: Ah! my brethren, how rare is this disposition among christians!

Without this disposition, however, (and let us not be ingenious to deceive ourselves) without this disposition there is no salvation. It implies a contradiction to say God will save us in any other way: for as it is contradictory to say that he will give to an equal number the qualities of an unequal number, or to bodies the properties of spirits, or to spirits the properties of bodies; so also is it a contradiction to say that vice shall reap the rewards of virtue, that the highway to hell is the path to paradise.

So that nothing remains in concluding this discourse but to ask you, what are your intentions? What designs have you formed? What projects do you resolve to pursue? What are your aims? Have you any thing more precious than your souls? Can you conceive a nobler hope than that of being saved? Can you propose a more advantageous end than your own salvation? Can you persuade yourselves that there is a greater felicity than the fruition of God? Will you destroy yourselves? Do you renounce those delightful hopes that are set before you in the gospel? And shall all the fruit of our ministry be to accuse and confound you before God?

Young man, thou mayest live fifty or sixty years: but at the expiration of those fifty or sixty years, time finishes and eternity begins. People of mature age, your race is partly run; ten, fifteen, or twenty years more, through the dissipations and employments inseparable from your lives, will vanish

vanish with an inconceivable rapidity; and then, time finishes and eternity begins with you. And ye old people, a few years, a few months, a few days more, and behold your race is at an end; behold your time finishes and your eternity begins. And can we resist this idea! Alas! what heart! what christians! what a church!

Grant Almighty God that our prayers may supply the defect of our exhortations; may we derive from thy bosom of infinite mercies what we despair of obtaining from the insensibility of our hearers! O thou author of religion, thou divine Spirit, from whom alone could proceed this beautiful system, which thou hast condescended to reveal to us, impress it in all its parts on our minds! Pluck up every plant which thy good hand hath not planted! Triumph over all the obstacles that our sins oppose against thine empire! Shut the gulfs of hell! Open the gates of heaven! Save us even in the spite of ourselves! Amen!

To the Father, to the Son, to the holy Ghost, be honour and glory, dominion and power for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON II.

THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

PREACHED IN THE FRENCH CHURCH AT ROTTERDAM ON THE FIRST LORD'S DAY OF THE YEAR 1724.

2 PETER iii. 8.

Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

WE could not meditate on the words you have heard, my brethren, without recollecting that miraculous cloud which conducted the Israelites through the desart. It was all luminous on one side, and all opaque on the other*. The Jews say it was the throne, or the triumphal chariot of that Angel who marched at the head of the camp of Israel; of that Angel whom they call the *Prince of the world, the Shekinah, the presence of the divine Majesty*, the Deity itfelf. It is not needful to examine this opinion. I do not know whether the pillar of a cloud were a throne of God, but it was a beautiful symbol of the Deity. What is the Deity in regard to us? If it be the most radiant of all light, it is at the same time the most covered with darkness. Let the greatest philosophers, let the most extraordinary geniusess elevate their meditations, and take the loftiest flights of which they are capable, in order to penetrate into the nature of the divine essence, the stronger efforts they make to understand this fearful subject, the more will they be absorbed in it: the nigher they approach the rays of this sun, the more will they be dazzled with its lustre. But yet, let the feeblest and most confined

* See Rabbi Menachem in Parasch. Beschalec, Exod. xiv. 19. fol. 63. edit. de Venise 5283. S.

confined genius seek instructions, in meditating on the divine grandeurs, to direct his faith, to regulate his conduct, and to sweeten the miseries that imbitter this valley of tears; he shall happily experience what the prophet did: *Does he look down to him? he shall be lightened,* Psal. xxxiv. 5.

God presents himself to your eyes to-day, as he once presented himself to the Israelites in that marvellous phœnomenon. Light on one side, darkness on the other. *A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and one day as a thousand years.* Let the greatest philosophers, let those extraordinary beings in whose formation God seems to have united an angelical intelligence to a human body, let them preach in our stead, let them fully explain the words of my text. From what abysses of existence does the perfect Being derive that duration, which alike overspreads the present, the future, and the past? how conceive a continuation of existence without conceiving a succession of time? how conceive a succession of time without conceiving that he, who is subject to it, acquires what he had not before? how affirm that he, who acquires what he had not before, considers *a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years?* So many questions, so many abysses, obscurities, darknesses for poor mortals.

But if you confine yourselves to a conviction of the truth of the words of my text; particularly, if you desire to consider them in regard to that influence, which they ought to have on your conduct, you will behold light issuing from every part, nor is there any one in this assembly who may not approach it with confidence. This has encouraged us to turn our attention to a subject, which, at first sight, seems more likely to confound, than to edify us.

St. Peter aims to rouse the piety of christians by the idea of that great day in which the world must be reduced to ashes: when new heavens and a new earth shall appear to the children of God. Libertines regarded that day as a chimera. *Where,* said they, *is the promise of the Lord's coming; for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue us they were from the beginning of the creation?* 2 Pet. iii. 4, &c. The words of my text are an answer to this objection; an idea which we will presently explain, but which you must, at least in a vague manner, retain all along, if you mean to follow us in this discourse, in which we would wish to include all the different views of the Apostle. In order to which three things are necessary.

I. We

I. We will examine our text in itself, and endeavour to establish this proposition, *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

II. We will prove what we have advanced: That is, That St. Peter's design in these words was to answer the objections of libertines against the doctrine of the conflagration of the world: and we will prove that they completely answer the purpose.

III. We will draw from this doctrine, secured against the objections of libertines, such motives to piety as the Apostle presents us with.

In considering these words in this point of light, we will apply them to your present circumstances. The renewal of the year, properly understood, is only the anniversary of the vanity of our life, and thence the calls to detach yourselves from the world. And what can be more proper to produce such a detachment than this reflection, that not only the years which we must pass on earth are consuming, but also that the years of the world's subsistence are already consumed in part, and that the time approaches, in which it must be delivered to the flames, and reduced to ashes?

Let us first consider the words of our text in themselves, and let us prove this proposition, *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

The notion I have of God is my principle: the words of my text are the consequence. If I establish the principle, the consequence will be incontestible. 1. *Eternity*—2. *Perfect knowledge*, and, in some sort, the sight and presence of all that has been, of all that is, and of all that shall be.—3. *Supreme happineſs*: are three ideas, which form my notion of the Deity: this is my principle. *A thousand years* then *are as one day, and one day as a thousand years with the Lord*: this is my consequence. Let us prove the truth of the principle, by justifying the notion we form of the Deity.

1. God is an *eternal* being. This is not a chimera of my mind; it is a truth accompanied with all the evidence of which a proposition is capable. I exist, I speak, you hear me, at least you seem to hear me. These are facts, the certainty of which all the philosophers in the world can never destroy. I am not able to new-mould myself, nor can I help the perception of truths, the knowledge of which (if I may be allowed to say so) is as essential to me as my own existence. It does not depend on me not to regard Pyrrho

and Academus, those famous defenders of doubt and uncertainty, as fools who extinguished the light of common sense, or rather as impostors, who pronounced propositions with their mouths, the falsity of which it was impossible their minds should not perceive. I repeat it again, the most subtle objections of all the philosophers in the world united, can never diminish in me that impression, which the perception of my own existence makes on my mind, nor hinder my evidence of the truth of these propositions, I exist, I speak, you hear me, at least (for with the people whom I oppose, one must weigh each expression, and in some sort, each syllable) at least I have the same impressions as if there were beings before my eyes who heard me.

If I am sure of my own existence, I am no less sure that I am not the author of it myself, and that I derive it from a superior Being. Were I altogether ignorant of the history of the world; if I had never heard that I was only *of yesterday*, as the psalmist speaks, Psal. xc. 4. if I knew not that my parents, who were born like me, are dead; were I not assured that I should soon die; if I knew nothing of all this, yet I should not doubt whether I owed my existence to a superior Being. I can never convince myself that a creature so feeble as I am, a creature whose least desires meet with insurmountable obstacles, a creature who cannot add *one cubit to his stature*, Matt. v. 27. a creature who cannot prolong his own life one single instant, one who is forced to yield, willing or unwilling, to a greater power which cries to him, *Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return*, Gen. iii. 19. I can never convince myself that such a creature existed from all eternity, much less that he owes his existence only to himself, and to the eminence of his own perfections. It is then sure that I exist: it is also certain that I am not the author of my own existence.

This certainty is all I ask; I ask only these two propositions: I exist, I am not the author of my own existence, to convince me that there is an eternal Being. Yes, though a revelation emanating from the bosom of Omniscience had never given me this idea of the Divinity; though Moses had never pronounced this oracle, *before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting thou art God*, Psal. xc. 2. though the four-and-twenty elders, who surround the throne of God, had never rendered homage to his eternity, or prostrating before him, incessantly cried, *We give thee thanks,*

thanks, Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, Rev. xi. 17. though the eternal Being had never said of himself, *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.* Rev. i. 8. Yea, though the eternal Being had never convinced me of his grandeur by the works of his hands, if I had been all alone in the nature of beings, I should have been forced to admit an eternal Being. And this proposition, There is an eternal Being, naturally flows from those, I exist, and I am not the author of my own existence; for if I be not the author of my own existence, I owe it to another Being. That Being to whom I owe my existence, derives his from himself, or like me, owes it to another. If he exist of himself, behold the eternal Being whom I have been seeking; if he derive his existence from another, I reason about him as about the former. Thus I ascend, thus I am constrained to ascend, till I arrive at that Being who exists of himself, and who hath always so existed.

Let such of you, my brethren, as cannot follow this reasoning, blame only themselves. Let not such people say, these are abstruse and metaphysical reflections, which should never be brought into these assemblies. It is not fair that the incapacity of a small number, an incapacity caused by their voluntary attachment to sensible things, and (so to speak) by their criminal interment in matter; it is not right that this should retard the edification of a whole people, and prevent the proposing of the first principles of natural religion. Eternity enters then into the idea of the creative Being; and this is what we proposed to prove.

2. *Omniscience, intimate acquaintance, and, in a manner, the presence of all that is, of all that has been, of all that shall be,* is the second idea which we form of the Deity. The more we meditate on the essence and self-existence of the eternal Being, the more are we convinced that omniscience necessarily belongs to eternity; so that to have proved that God possesses the first of these attributes, is to have proved that he possesses the second. But as I am certain, that a great number of my hearers would charge those reflections with obscurity, of which they are ignorant only through their own inattention, I will not undertake to prove, by a chain of propositions, that the eternal Being knows all things; that, as author of all, he knows the nature of all; that, knowing the nature of all, he knows what must result from all. It will be better to give you this subject ready digested in our holy scriptures, than to oblige you to collect

it by your own meditation. Recal then on this article these expressions of the sacred writers: *O Lord, thou knowest all things,* John xxi. 17. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart and try the reins,* Jer. xvii. 9, 10. *Known unto him are all his works from the beginning,* Acts xv. 18. *The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight,* Heb. iv. 12, &c. Some interpreters think, that by the *word of God,* we must understand here, not the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the phrase is generally understood, but his person. If this be St. Paul's idea, he uses, methinks, the same metaphysical reasoning which we have proposed: that is, that he who created all, knows all. Observe how this reasoning is followed and developed in the apostle's words. *The word of God,* or as it is in the Greek, the *logos, the word of God is quick and powerful;* that is to say, that as Jesus Christ, as God, hath a fund of life and existence, he hath also freely and effectually communicated life and existence to others. In this sense it is elsewhere said, that *by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,* Col. i. 16. And in St. John's gospel, *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made,* John i. 1, 3. But this *word, quick and powerful,* who hath given being to all, perfectly knows all; *sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Omniscience, intimate knowledge, and, as I said before, the presence of all that is, of all that was, of all that shall be, are as essential to God as eternity. This also, we hope, is sufficiently proved.

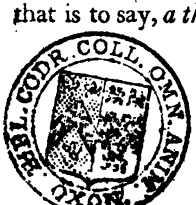
3. *Supreme felicity* is the third idea we have formed of God; it flows immediately from the two first. Every intelligent being is capable of happiness, nor can he regard happiness

happiness with indifference; he is inclined by his very nature to render himself happy. He cannot love misery as misery: he never suffers a present misery but in hopes of a future pleasure; or else he supports a misery because it appears to him more tolerable than the means proposed to deliver him. Even they, who have wilfully plunged themselves into the gulfs of hell, in a fit of black melancholy, would not have taken that dreadful step, had they not revolved this melancholy imagination in their distracted minds, that the assurance of being plunged into hell is less tolerable than hell itself. It implies a contradiction, that an intelligent being, capable of being happy or miserable, should be indifferent to his own happiness or misery. If any thing be wanting to the felicity of God, the defect must not be attributed to his will, the cause must be sought in his weakness, that is, in his want of power.

But who can conceive that a Being, who existed from all eternity, who gave existence to all things, and who knows all things, hath only a finite and limited power? I am well aware of the difficulty of following the attributes of the Deity, and that, in the greatest part of our reasonings on this grand subject, we suppose what ought to be proved. But as far as we are capable of penetrating this profound subject, we have grounds for reasoning in this manner: God hath given being to all things, and he saw what must result from them; it depended then entirely on him to form the plan of the world or not to form it; to be alone or to impart existence: It depended on him to form the plan of such a world as we see, or to form another plan. He hath followed, in the choice which he hath made, that which was most proper for his own glory. If, to these feeble speculations, we join the infallible testimony of revelation, we shall find a perfect agreement with our ideas on this article: that the Creator is the *happy God* by excellence, and that because he is eternal and omniscient, he must for these very reasons be infinitely happy. This article also is sufficiently proved.

These three ideas of the Deity are three sources of proofs, in favour of St. Peter's proposition in the words of my text, *a thousand years before the Lord are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.*

God is an eternal Being. Then *a thousand years with him are as one day, and one day as a thousand years*; that is to say, *a thousand years and one day* are such inconsiderable



derable measures of duration, that, whatever disproportion they have to each other, they appear to have none when compared with the duration of eternity. There is a great difference between one drop of water and the twenty thousand baths, which were contained in that famous vessel in Solomon's temple, which, on account of its matter and capacity, was called the *sea of brass*, 1 Chron. xviii. 8. but this vesse litself, in comparison of the sea, properly so called, was so small, that when we compare all it could contain with the sea, the twenty thousand baths, that is, one hundred and sixty thousand pounds weight, appear only as a drop of water. The extreme difference between that quantity of water and a little drop vanishes when compared with the ocean. One drop of water with the sea is as twenty thousand baths, and twenty thousand baths are as one drop of water. There is a great difference between the light of a taper and that of a flambeau: but expose both to the light of the sun, and their difference will be imperceptible. The light of a light taper before the sun is as the light of a flambeau, and the light of a flambeau as that of a little taper. In like manner, eternal duration is so great an object, that it causeth every thing to disappear that can be compared with it. *A thousand years* are no more before this *than one day*, nor *one day than a thousand years*; and these two terms, so unequal in themselves, seem to have a perfect equality when compared with eternity. We, minute creatures, we consider a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour, as a very little space in the course of our lives: we lose without scruple a day, an hour, a quarter of an hour: but we are very much to blame; for this day, this hour, this quarter of an hour, should we even live a whole age, would be a considerable portion of our life. But, if we attend to the little probability of our living a whole age; if we reflect that this little space of time, of which we are so profuse, is the only space we can call our own; if we seriously think that one quarter of an hour, that one hour, that one day is perhaps the only time given us to prepare our accounts, and to decide our eternal destiny; we should have reason to acknowledge, that it was madness to lose the least part of so short a life. But God revolves (if I may venture to say so) in the immense space of eternity. Heap millions of ages upon millions of ages, add new millions to new millions, all this is nothing in comparison of the duration of the eternal Being. In this sense,

sense, *a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.*

2. God knows all. Then, *a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years;* because he sees no more in *a thousand years* than in *one day;* because he sees as much in *one day* as he can see in *a thousand years.* Ignorance and uncertainty are the principal causes that make us think a short space of time a long duration; especially, when our ignorance and uncertainty respect things which we ardently desire to know: *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,* is a saying of the wise man. Prov. xiii. 12. The very time, in which we are in suspense about an apprehended evil is insupportable unto us. It seems to us, while we expect a fatal sentence, that we are every moment suffering its execution.

God knows all. He sees all that was, all that is, all that ever will be. That moment, which he assigned for the formation of this universe, is as present to his mind as that, which he hath determined for its destruction. He knows the success of the various plans, which at present exercise the speculations of the greatest geniusses, and which occasion an infinite number of different opinions among politicians. He knows to what lengths that tyrant, who is the scourge of the whole earth, shall carry his rage. He knows how long that empire shall maintain its dignity, which at present subsists with so much glory. He knows during what space Antichrist shall yet oppose the dominion of the king Messiah: and when the king Messiah shall make him lick the dust. He knows when the air shall resound with that comfortable exclamation, *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit!* Rev. xviii. 2.

3. In fine, God is supremely happy. Then, *a thousand years with him are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.* In the enjoyment of perfect happiness, the duration of time is imperceptible. Placed, as we are, my dearest brethren, in this valley of miseries, tasting only imperfect and imbittered pleasures, it is very difficult for us to conceive the impression, which felicity makes on an intelligence supremely happy. If the enjoyment of some small good make us conceive to a certain degree a state, in which ages appear moments, the miseries inseparable from our lives presently replunge us into a state, in which moments appear ages; in which sorrows of the body, and sorrows of the mind, frequently

quently less tolerable than those of the body, so powerfully apply our minds to each indivisible space of time spent in pain, that we think our sufferings have been long, when we have scarcely begun to suffer. But God is always happy, and always supremely happy; he always enjoys that perfect felicity, which makes *a thousand years*, ten thousand millions of years, vanish with an inconceivable rapidity. It would be unhappy not to enjoy this kind of felicity more than ten or twelve millions of years, because the impression, which that felicity would make on the soul would be so powerful and lively, that it would render him who enjoyed it insensible to time; time would expire, and he would hardly perceive he had enjoyed any thing, even when he had possessed happiness as long as I have supposed. God would be unhappy (allow me this expression) if his felicity were not eternal. But this is one of the subjects which must intimidate a preacher through the difficulty he meets with in furnishing matter. We must have ideas beyond human. We must have terms, which mankind have not yet invented. We ourselves must have participated the felicity of God; we must speak to men who also had partaken of it; and afterwards, we must have agreed together on a new language to express each idea excited by the happiness, of which we had made so blessed an experience. Represent to yourselves a Being, or rather think, think, my dear hearers, on the difficulty of representing a Being, who, having in the infinite capacity of his intelligence all possible plans of this universe, hath preferred that which appeared to him the wisest, the best, and the most conformable to the holiness of his attributes: represent a Being who hath executed this plan, a Being who hath created in this vast extent which our imagination fancies, in that which our whole mind, more capable still of conceiving grand objects than our imagination alone, or our senses admires: represent to yourselves a Being who hath created whatever is most capable of contributing to perfect felicity; represent a Being who loves and who is beloved by, objects worthy of his esteem; a Being who knows how to repress the madness of those who rebel against his empire; a Being who shares his felicity with spirits whom he esteems, and by whom he is esteemed above all things; a Being who hath the pleasure of rendering the objects of his esteem happy, and who acknowledge that all their happiness comes from him: spirits continually praising the author of their felicity, casting their crowns at his feet, and incessantly crying,

ing, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory*, Isa. vi. 3. Represent to yourselves a Being who is approved by intelligences skilful in virtues, in grandeurs, in objects worthy of praise; a Being who loves only order, and who hath power to maintain it; a Being who is at the summit of felicity, and who knows he shall be so for ever. O ages! O millions of ages! O thousands of millions of ages! O duration the longest that can be imagined by an intelligence composed (if I may speak so) of all intelligences, how short must ye appear to so happy a Being! There is no time with him; there is no measure of time. One thousand years, ten thousand years, one quarter of an hour, one instant, is almost the same. *A thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years.*

We have considered our text in itself; we will now shew the end of the Apostle in proposing it, and that it was very proper to answer that end. This is our second part.

St. Peter, as said before, St. Peter meant to refute the odious objections of some profane persons of his own time, who pretended to make the doctrine of an universal judgment doubtful, and who said, in order to obscure its truth, or enervate its evidence, *Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain as they were?* verse 4. I am aware that this comment is disputed, and some have thought the destruction of Jerusalem was the subject of this whole chapter, and not the end of the world: but, however averse we are to the decisive tone, we will venture to demonstrate that the Apostle had far greater objects in view than the fatal catastrophe of the Jewish nation. This I think clearly appears.

1. By the nature of the objection, which libertines made, *Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain as they were?* These libertines did not mean, that from the beginning of the world the commonwealth of Israel had suffered no considerable alteration; they did not mean from that false principle to draw this false consequence, that Jerusalem would always remain as it then was. How could they be such novices in the history of their nation, as not to know the sad vicissitudes, the banishments, and the plunderings, which the Jews had undergone? They meant, that, though some particular changes had happened in some parts of the world, the generality of creatures had always remained in the same state; thence they pretended to conclude that they would always remain so.

2. This appears further by the manner in which the Apostle answers them in the verses preceding the text. He alledges against them the example of the deluge. *This*, says he, *they are willingly ignorant of, that the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*, ver. 5, 6. To this he adds, *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the things that are therein shall be burnt up*, ver. 10. On which we reason thus: The world, that was formerly destroyed with water, is the same which shall be destroyed by fire; but the world that was destroyed with water, was not the Jewish nation only: St. Peter then predicts a destruction more general than that of the Jews.

3. This appears further by this consideration. The people, to whom St. Peter wrote, did not live in Judea, but were dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These people could have but little to do with the destruction of Jerusalem. Whether Jesus Christ terminated the duration of that city suddenly or slowly, was a question that regarded them indirectly only; but the day of which St. Peter speaks interests all Christians, and St. Peter exhorts all Christians to prepare for it, as being personally concerned in it.

4. Add a fourth consideration, taken from what follows our text: *Even as our beloved brother Paul also speaks of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest unto their own destruction*, ver. 15, 16. What are *these things hard to be understood?* Many interpreters, ancient and modern, have thought that the doctrine of justification was intended; a doctrine established by St. Paul, and *wrested* by many *to their own destruction*, as from thence they concluded that good works were useless. But, methinks, it is more probable that St. Peter designs some parts of the first epistle to the Thessalonians, (ch. iv. 13, &c. and v. 1, &c.) where the Apostle had spoken as if the day of judgment was very nigh; and from which many concluded that it would immediately appear, and the mistake caused a general subversion of society. Since then, St. Paul had spoken of the day of judgment, and St. Peter *speaks of the same things*, it follows, that St. Peter designed to establish the truth of a general judgment, against those infidels who had endeavoured to subvert it.

But

But how is what the apostle says, *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*; how is such a proposition proper to refute the odious objection of infidels, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming?* If a man who possesseth great riches promise a small sum to an indigent person, if he defer the fulfilment of his promise, in vain you endeavour to exculpate him by saying, the promiser is so opulent that a small sum with him is as great riches, and great riches are as a small sum.

In like manner, to say that *a thousand years with God are as one day, and one day as a thousand years*, is that to answer the objection? The question is not what the time of delay is to the eternal Being; the question is, what that time is to poor mortals, who are fastened to the earth loaded with miseries, and to whom one day is as a thousand days, and not a thousand years as one day.

This difficulty is solved by the connection of our text with the following verses: *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* This answer is conclusive, as you will more fully perceive by the following paraphrase. The delay of the day of judgment may be considered either in relation to men who must be judged, or to God himself who will judge them. If you consider it in regard to men who must be judged, they have no room to complain that God defers this important period; on the contrary, they ought to consider the pretended slackness, of which they complain, as an effect of the adorable love of their judge, who invites them to repentance. The manner, in which God ordinarily takes men out of this life, is much more proper to incline them to repentance than the terrible retinue of his coming to judgment. How terrible will his appearance be! What eye will not be dazzled! Whose conscience will not be alarmed! Here blow the trumpets, the dreadful sounds of which proclaim the approach of the Judge of this universe. There, the heavens, which once opened to receive the Son of God, open again that he may return to the earth to execute his threatenings on rebellious men. Here, earth and sea restore the bodies which they have devoured. There, those *thousand thousands*, those *ten thousand times ten thousand*, who are con-

tinually *before God*, Dan. vii. 10. offer their ministry to him, and are the witnesses, admirers, and executors of his judgment. Here, open the eternal books, in which so many unrighteous thoughts, so many unprofitable words, so many criminal actions are registered. There, sentences are preparing, destinies determining, final decrees just pronouncing. Who then could have presence of mind enough to recur to genuine repentance, even supposing there were yet time for repentance? Men then have no reason to complain that the day of judgment is not yet come. *The Lord is patient towards all men, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

If you consider the pretended delay of judgment in regard to God, as we have considered it in regard to men, you will readily acknowledge that what appears delay to you does not appear so to him. Why? Because *a thousand years are with him as one day, and one day as a thousand years*; because this long term that offends you is but as an instant to the perfect Being.

It seems to me that this reasoning is conclusive. This shall suffice for the present. Let us conclude, and let us employ the few moments which remain to infer from the doctrine of the general conflagration, secured against the objections of libertines, such motives to piety as the apostle intended we should draw from them. *Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* This is the doctrine that the apostle establisheth. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?* This is the consequence which he deduces; the justness of which inference will appear by five descriptions, which the general conflagration traces before our eyes: 1. A description of the power of our Judge: 2. A description of the horrors of vice: 3. A description of the vanity of the present world: 4. A description of the beauties of the world

world to come: 5. A description of the excellence of piety. This is the third part, and the conclusion of this discourse.

1. The destruction of the universe affords us a picture of *the power of our Judge.* How powerful, my brethren, is this Judge! *Who can resist his will?* Rom. ix. 19. Once there was no sea, no earth, no firmament; one frightful night covered the whole face of the universe. *He said,* and all these beings appeared, Gen. i. 3. Now we behold a sea, an earth, and a firmament. *He will say,* and the sea shall be dry, the earth shall be consumed, the stars shall disappear, the firmament shall be found no more. Such is the God whom the sinner attacks. A God, *who taketh up the isles as a very little thing,* Isa. xl. 15. A God *who removeth the mountains and overturneth them in his anger, who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.* A God, *who commandeth the sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars; who doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number,* Job. ix. 5, 6, 7. 10. This, sinner, is the God whom thou attackest. But doth the idea of a God so powerful never excite terror in thy rebellious soul? *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he,* 1 Cor. x. 22. *Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered,* Job ix. 4. *Can any resist my power? Who would set the thorns and briars against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. O let them make peace with me, and they shall make peace with me.* Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

2. The conflagration of the universe affords us a picture of *the horrors of vice.* Behold how far God carries his resentment against sin. It is not enough to condemn to eternal flames, and to confine in chains of darkness, those who have fled from his justice. It is not enough to pour out his wrath upon those who have committed the crime, he detests even the instruments of the crime; he designs that all things that have served sin shall bear the marks of his anger. If, under the law, a man had defiled himself with a beast, he must die with the brutal object of his passion, Lev. xx. 15, 16. Thus God, not content to punish the avaricious with unquenchable fire, will destroy even objects of avarice, and dissolve the gold and silver with which the miser committed idolatry. Not content to punish the ambitious, he will destroy even the instruments of ambition, and overturn those thrones and palaces which have caused it. Not content to punish

punish the voluptuous, he will destroy even objects of voluptuousness, and consume the heavens, the earth, and the elements, which have afforded matter for concupiscence. Heavens, earth, elements, are ye guilty? But if ye be treated with so much rigour for having been the unconscious instruments of the crime, what must the condition of the criminal be.

3. In the burning of the universe, we find a representation of *the vanity of the present world.* What is this world which fascinates our eyes? It is a funeral pile that already begins to burn, and will soon be entirely consumed; it is a world which must end, and all that must end is far inferior to an immortal soul. The thought of death is already a powerful motive to us to place our affections on another world; for what is death? it is to every individual what, one day, the final ruin will be to the generality of mankind; it is the destruction of the heavens, which *pass away with a great noise;* it is the dissolution of elements; it is the entire conflagration of the world, and of *the works which are therein.* Yet vanity hath invented refuges against this storm. The hope of an imaginary immortality hath been able to support some men against the fear of a real death. The idea of existing, in the minds of those who exist after them, hath, in some sort, comforted them under the miserable thought of being no more. Hence pompous buildings, and stately edifices; hence rich monuments, and superb mausoleums; hence proud inscriptions, and vain-glorious titles, inscribed on marble and brass: but behold the dissolution of all those bonds. The destruction of the world deprives us of our imaginary being, as death deprives us of our real existence. You will not only be shortly stretched in your tombs, and cease to use the houses, and fields, and palaces which you inhabit; but these houses, these palaces, these fields will be consumed, and the memory of all that is fastened to the world will vanish with the world. Since then, this is the condition of all sensible things, since all these sensible things must perish; immortal man, infinite spirit, eternal soul, dost thou fasten thyself to vanity and instability? Dost thou not seek for a good more suitable to thy nature and duration? *seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?*

4. The conflagration of the universe furnisheth a description of *the world to come.* You often hear us declaim on the

the nothingness of earthly things; we frequently diminish the worth of all that is great and glorious; we frequently cry with Solomon, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity:* Vanity in pleasures, vanity in grandeurs, vanity in riches, vanity in sciences, vanity in all. But yet, my brethren, how substantial would this vanity be—how amiable would this nothingness appear, if by a happy assemblage of all that the world hath of the beautiful, we could acquire the reality of a life, of which it is easy to form to one's self the idea! Could I extract the choicest dignities and fortunes; could I inhabit the most temperate clime, and the most pleasant country; could I choose the most benevolent hearts, and the wisest minds; could I take the most happy temper, and the most sublime genius; could I cultivate the sciences, and make the fine arts flourish; could I collect and unite all that could please the passions, and banish all that could give pain. A life formed on this plan, how likely to please us! How is it that God, who hath resolved to render us one day happy, doth not allow us to continue in this world, and content himself with uniting all these happy circumstances in our favour? *It is good to be here:* O that he would allow us here to build our *tabernacles,* Matt. xvii. 4. Ah! my brethren, a life formed on this plan might indeed answer the ideas of happiness which feeble and finite geniusses form: but such a plan cannot even approach the designs of an infinite God. A life formed on this plan, might indeed exhaust a terrestrial love, but it could never reach the love of an infinite God. No, all the charms of this society, of this fortune, and of this life; no, all the softness of these climates, and of these countries; no, all the benevolence of these hearts, and all the friendship of these minds; no, all the happiness of this temper, and all the sublimity of this genius; no, all the secrets of the sciences, and all the discoveries of the fine arts; all the attractions of these societies, and all the pleasures of the passions, have nothing, I do not say which exhausts the love of God in Jesus Christ, I do not say which answers, I venture to say which approaches it. To accomplish this love there must be another world; there must be new heavens and a new earth; there must be objects far more grand.

Finally, the destruction of the universe displays *the excellence of piety.* O that I could represent the believer amidst fires, flames, winds, tempests, the confusion of all nature, content, peaceable, unalterable! O that I could represent the heavens passing away, the elements dissolving with

with fervent heat, the earth and the things which are in it burning up, and the believer, that man, that inconsiderable man, little by his nature, but great by the privileges with which piety endows him, without suspicion, rising fearless above all the catastrophes of the universe, and surviving its ruins! O that I could describe the believer, while all the *tribes of the earth mourn and smite their breasts*, Matt. xxiv. 30. while the wicked shall be *as if they were giving up the ghost*, Luke xxi. 26. while their despair exhales in these dreadful howlings, *Mountains fall on us, hills cover us from the face of him who sits upon the throne, and from the face of the Lamb!* Rev. vi. 16. O that I could describe the believer assured, triumphant, founded on the rock of ages *hasting unto the coming of the day of God*, as our Apostle expresseth it, 2 Pet. iii. 12. aiming with transports of joy which we cannot express, (O may we one day experience these transports!) aiming to approach the presence of Jesus Christ, as his tenderest friend and deliverer, literally proving the truth of this promise, *when thou passest through the waters they shall not overflow thee, when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt*, Isa. xliii. 2. O that I could represent him crying, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. come, receive a creature once defiled with sin; sometimes even rebellious, yet always having, at the bottom of his heart, principles of love to thee; but now ravished with transports of joy, because he is entering an œconomy, in which he shall be always submissive, and always faithful.

What shall I say to you, my dear brethren, to incline you to piety, if all these grand motives be without success? if the words of my text, if the voice of an Apostle,—what do I say the voice of an Apostle? If the *sun darkened*, if the *moon changed into blood*, if the *stars fallen from heaven*, if the *powers of heaven shaken*, if the *heavens passing away with a great noise*, if the *elements dissolving with fervent heat*, if the *earth consumed with all that is therein*, if the universal destruction of nature and elements be incapable of loosening and detaching you from the present world.

It is said, that, some days before the destruction of Jerusalem, a voice was heard proceeding from the holy place, and crying, *Let us go hence, let us go hence**. My brethren, such a voice

* Josephus de Bell. Jud. lib. vi. cap. 31.

voice addresses you. We ground our exhortations to day, not on the destruction of one people only; we preach (if I may be allowed to say so) in sight of the ruins of this whole universe: Yes, from the centre of the trembling world and crashing elements, a voice sounds, *Let us go hence;* let us quit the world; give our hopes more solid bases than inkindled worlds, which will shortly be burnt up. And then, pass away heavens with a great noise, consume elements, burn earth with all thy works, perish universe, perish nature, our felicity is above all such catastrophes, we cleave to the God of ages, to God who is the source of existence and duration, to God before whom *a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years, O Lord, of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou, thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee,* Psal. cii. 26, &c. God grant we may experience these great promises! To him be honour and glory. Amen.

SERMON III.

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art *there: If I make my bed in hell, behold thou* art there. If *I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light* are *both alike* to thee.

COULD I have one wish, to answer my proposed end of preaching to-day with efficacy, Christians, it should be to shew you God in this assembly. Moses had such an advantage, no man therefore ever spoke with greater success. He gave the law to the people in God the legislator's presence. He could say, This law which I give you proceeds from God: here is his throne, there is his lightning, yonder is his thunder. Accordingly, never were a people more struck with a legislator's voice. Moses had hardly begun to speak, but, at least for that moment, all hearts were united, and all Sinai echoed with one voice, crying, *All that thou hast spoken we will do.* Exod. xix. 8.

But in vain are our sermons drawn from the sacred sources: in vain do we say to you, *Thus saith the Lord:* you see only a man; you hear only a mortal voice in this pulpit; God hath put his *treasure into earthen vessels,* 2 Cor. iv. 7. and our auditors estimating the treasure by the meanness of the vessel, instead of supporting the meanness

of the vessel for the sake of the treasure, hear us without respect, and, generally, derive no advantage from the ministry.

But were God present in this assembly, could we shew you the Deity amongst you, authorizing our voice by his approbation and presence, and examining with what dispositions you hear his word, which of you, which of you, my brethren, could resist so eminent and so noble a motive?

Christians, this idea is not destitute of reality: God is every where; he is in this church. Vails of flesh and blood prevent your sight of him; these must fall, and you must open the eyes of your spirits, if you would see a *God*, who *is a spirit*, John iv. 24. Hear our prophet; hear his magnificent description of the immensity and omnipresence of God, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

In a text less abundant in riches, we might make some remarks on the terms *spirit* and *presence*; but we will content ourselves at present with indicating what ideas we affix to them, by observing, that by the *spirit* and *presence* of God, we understand God himself. I know, some divines discover great mysteries in these terms, and tell us that there are some passages in scripture where the word *presence* means the second person in the most holy Trinity, and where the term *spirit* is certainly to be understood of the third. But as there are some passages where these terms have not this signification, it is beyond all doubt that this, which we are explaining, is precisely of the latter kind. However, if any dispute our comment, we shall leave them to dispute it; for it would be unjust to consume that time, which is dedicated to the edification of a whole congregation in refuting a particular opinion. The other expressions in our text, *heaven, hell; the wings of the morning*, a figurative expression denoting the rapidity of the light in communicating itself from one end of the world to the other; these expressions, I say, need no comment. The *presence* of God, the

the *spirit* of God, signify then the divine essence: and this assemblage of ideas, *whither shall I go from thy spirit? whither shall I flee from thy presence?* means, that God is immense, and that he is present in every place.

But wherein consists this immensity and omnipresence? If ever a question required developing, this certainly does: not only because it presents to the mind an abstract subject, which does not fall under the observation of the senses, but because many who have treated this matter (pardon an opinion which does not proceed from a desire of opposing any individual, but only from a love to the truth) many who have handled the subject, have contributed more to perplex, than to explain it. We may observe, in general, that, unless we be wholly unacquainted with the history of the sciences, it is impossible not to acknowledge, that all questions about the nature of spirits, all that are any way related to metaphysics, were very little understood before the time of that celebrated philosopher, whom God seems to have bestowed on the world to purify reason, as he had some time before raised up others to purify religion*.

What heaps of crude and indigested notions do we find, among the schoolmen, of the immensity of God? One said, God was a point, indivisible indeed, but a point, however, that had the peculiar property of occupying every part of the universe. Another, that God was the place of all beings, the immense extent in which his power had placed them. Another, that his essence was *really* in heaven, but yet, *repletively*, as they express it, in every part of the universe. In short, this truth hath been obscured by the grossest ignorance. Whatever aversion we have to the decisive tone, we will venture to affirm, that people, who talked in this manner of God, had no ideas themselves of what they advanced.

Do not be afraid of our conducting you into these wild mazes; do not imagine that we will busy ourselves in exposing all these notions for the sake of labouring to refute them. We will content ourselves with giving you some light into the omnipresence of God:

I. By removing those false ideas, which, at first, seem to present themselves to the imagination;

II. By assigning the true.

I. Let

* The philosopher intended by Mr. S. I suppose, is his countryman *Descartes*, born in 1596. Vie de Desc. par Baillet.

I. Let us remove the false ideas, which, at first, present themselves to the imagination; as if, when we say that God is present in any place, we mean that he is actually contained therein; as if, when we say that God is in every place, we mean to assign to him a real and proper extension. Neither of these is designed; and, to remove these ideas, my brethren, two reflections are sufficient.

God is a spirit. A spirit cannot be in a place, at least in the manner in which we conceive of place.

1. God is a spirit. What relation can you find between wisdom, power, mercy, and all the other attributes, which enter into your notion of the divinity, and the nature of bodies? Pulverise matter, give it all the different forms of which it is susceptible, elevate it to its highest degree of attainment, make it vast, and immense; moderate, or small; luminous, or obscure; opaque, or transparent: there will never result any thing but figures, and never will you be able, by all these combinations, or divisions, to produce one single sentiment, one single thought, like that of the meanest and most contracted of all mankind. If matter then cannot be the subject of one single operation of the soul of a mechanic, how shall it be the subject of those attributes which make the essence of God himself?

But perhaps God, who is spiritual in one part of his essence, may be corporeal in another part, like man, who, although he hath a spiritual soul, is yet united to a portion of matter? No: for, however admirable in man that union of spiritual and sensible may be, and those laws which unite his soul to his body, nothing more fully marks his weakness and dependence, and consequently nothing can less agree with the divine essence. Is it not a mark of the dependence of an immortal and intelligent soul, to be inveloped in a little flesh and blood, which, according to their different motions, determine his joy or sorrow, his happiness or misery? Is it not a mark of the weakness of our spirits to have the power of acting only on that little matter, to which we are united, and to have no power over more? Who can imagine that God hath such limits? He hath no body: he is united to none; yet he is united to all. That celebrated philosopher, shall I call him? or atheist*, who said that the assemblage of

* Mr. S. means, I should suppose, Spinoza: whose system of atheism, says a sensible writer, is more gross, and therefore less dangerous, than others: his poison carrying its antidote with it.

of all existence constituted the divine essence, who would have us consider all corporeal beings as the body of the divinity, published a great extravagance, if he meant that the divine essence consisted of this assemblage. But there is a very just sense, in which it may be said that the whole universe is the body of the Deity. In effect, as I call this portion of matter my body, which I move, act and direct as I please, so God actuates by his will every part of the universe: he obscures the sun, he calms the winds, he commands the sea. But this very notion excludes all corporiety from God, and proves that God is a spirit. If God sometimes represents himself with feet, with hands, with eyes, he means in these portraits, rather to give us emblems of his attributes, than images (properly speaking) of any parts which he possesseth. Therefore, when he attributes these to himself, he gives them so vast an extent, that, we easily perceive, they are not to be grossly understood. Hath he hands? they are hands *which weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance,* which *measure the waters in the hollow of his hand, and mete out the heavens with a span,* Isa. lx. 12. Hath he eyes? they are eyes that penetrate the most unmeasureable distances. Hath he feet? they are feet which reach from heaven to earth, for the *heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool,* ch. lxvi. 1. Hath he a voice? it is as *the sound of many waters, breaking the cedars of Lebanon, making mount Sirion skip like an unicorn, and the hinds to calve,* Psal. xxix. 3, 5, 6, 9.

This reminds me of a beautiful passage in Plato. He says that the gods, particularly the chief good, the ineffable beauty, as he calls him, cannot be conceived of but by the understanding only, and by quitting sensible objects; that, in order to contemplate the divinity, terrestrial ideas must be surmounted; that the eyes cannot see him; that the ears cannot hear him. A thought which Julian the apostate, a great admirer of that philosopher, so nobly expresses in his satire on the Cæsars. Thus every thing serves to establish our first principle, that God is a spirit.

2. But to prove that God is a spirit, and to prove that he occupies no place, at least as our imagination conceives, is, in our opinion, to establish the same thesis.

I know how difficult it is to make this consequence intelligible and clear, not only to those who have never been accustomed to meditation, and who are therefore more excusable for having confused ideas; but even to such as, having cultivated

cultivated the sciences, are most intent on refining their ideas. I freely acknowledge, that after we have used our utmost efforts to rise above sense and matter, it will be extremely difficult to conceive the existence of a spirit, without conceiving it in a certain place. Yet, I think, whatever difficulty there may be in the system of those who maintain that an immaterial being cannot be in a place, properly so called, there are greater difficulties still in the opposite opinion: for what is immaterial hath no parts; what hath no parts hath no form; what hath no form hath no extension; what hath no extension can have no situation in place, properly so called. For what is it to be in place? is it not to fill space, is it not to be adjusted with surrounding bodies? how adjust with surrounding bodies without parts? how consist of parts, without being corporeal? But if you ascribe a real and proper extension to a spirit, every thought of that spirit would be a separate portion of that extension, as every part of the body is a separate portion of the whole body: every operation of spirit would be a modification of that extension, as every operation of body is a modification of body; and, were this the case, there would be no absurdity in saying that a thought is round, or square, or cubic, which is nothing less than the confounding of spirit with matter. Thus the idea, which our imagination forms of the omnipresence of God, when it represents the essence of the Supreme Being filling infinite spaces, as we are lodged in our houses, is a false idea that ought to be carefully avoided.

II. What notions then must we form of the immensity of God? In what sense do we conceive that the infinite Spirit is every where present? My brethren, the bounds of our knowledge are so strait, our sphere is so contracted, we have such imperfect ideas of spirits, even of our own spirits, and, for a much stronger reason, of the Father of spirits, that no genius in the world, however exalted you may suppose him, after his greatest efforts of meditation, can say to you, Thus far extend the attributes of God; behold a complete idea of his immensity and omnipresence. Yet, by the help of sound reason, above all, by the aid of revelation, we may give you, if not complete, at least distinct ideas of the subject: it is possible, if not to indicate all the senses in which God is immense, at least to point out some: it is possible, if not to shew you all the truth, at least to discover it in part.

Let

Let us not conceive the omnipresence of God as a particular attribute (if I may venture to say so) of the Deity, as goodness or wisdom, but as the extent or infinity of many others. The omnipresence of God is that universal property by which he communicates himself to all, diffuses himself through all, is the great director of all, or, to confine ourselves to more distinct ideas still, the infinite spirit is present in every place.

1. By a boundless knowledge.
2. By a general influence.
3. By an universal direction.

God is every where, because he *seeth* all, because he *influenceth* all, because he *directeth* all. This we must prove and establish. But if you would judge rightly of what you have heard, and of what you may still hear, you must remember that this subject hath no relation to your pleasures, nor to your policy, nor to any of those objects which occupy and fill your whole souls; and consequently, that if you would follow us, you must stretch your meditation, and go, as it were, out of yourselves.

1. The first idea of God's omnipresence is his *omniscience*, God is every where present, because he *seeth* all. This the prophet had principally in view. *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it*, ver. 1, 2, 3, &c. Then follow the words of our text: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit*; and so on.

Let us not then consider the Deity, after the example of the schoolmen, as a point fixed in the universality of beings. Let us consider the universality of beings as a point, and the Deity as an immense eye, which sees all that passes in that point, all that can possibly pass there; and which, by an all-animating intelligence, makes an exact combination of all the effects of matter, and of all the dispositions of spirit.

1. God knows all the effects of matter. An expert workman takes a parcel of matter proportioned to a work which he meditates, he makes divers wheels, disposes them properly,

and sees, by the rules of his art, what must result from their assemblage. Suppose a sublime, exact genius, knowing how to go from principle to principle, and from consequence to consequence, after foreseeing what must result from two wheels joined together, should imagine a third, he will as certainly know what must result from a third, as from a first and second; after imagining a third, he may imagine a fourth, and properly arrange it with the rest in his imagination; after a fourth a fifth, and so on to an endless number. Such a man could mathematically demonstrate, in an exact and infallible manner, what must result from a work composed of all these different wheels. Suppose further, that this workman, having accurately considered the effects which would be produced on these wheels, by that subtle matter which in their whirlings continually surrounds them, and which, by its perpetual action and motion, chafes, wears, and dissolves all bodies; this workman would tell you, with the same exactness, how long each of these wheels would wear, and when the whole work would be consumed. Give this workman life and industry proportional to his imagination, furnish him with materials proportional to his ideas, and he will produce a vast, immense work, all the different motions of which he can exactly combine; all the different effects of which he can evidently foresee. He will see, in what time motion will be communicated from the first of these wheels to the second, at what time the second will move the third, and so of the rest: he will foretel all their different motions, and all the effects which must result from their different combinations.

Hitherto this is only supposition, my brethren, but it is a supposition that conducts us to the most certain of all facts. This workman is God. God is this sublime, exact, infinite genius. He calls into being matter, without motion, and, in some sense, without form. He gives this matter form and motion. He makes a certain number of wheels, or rather he makes them without number. He disposes them as he thinks proper. He communicates a certain degree of motion agreeable to the laws of his wisdom. Thence arises the world which strikes our eyes. By the forementioned example, I conceive, that God, by his own intelligence, saw what must result from the arrangement of all the wheels that compose this world, and knew, with the utmost exactness, all their combinations. He saw that a certain degree of motion, imparted to a certain portion of matter, would produce water;

water; that another degree of motion, communicated to another portion of matter, would produce fire; that another would produce earth, and so of the rest. He foresaw, with the utmost precision, what would result from this water, from this fire, from this earth when joined together, and agitated by such a degree of motion as he should communicate. By the bare inspection of the laws of motion, he foresaw fires, he foresaw shipwrecks, he foresaw earthquakes, he foresaw all the vicissitudes of time, he foresaw those which must put a period to time, when *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth with all the works that are in it shall be burnt up*, 2 Pet. iii. 10.

2. But, if God could combine all that would result from the laws of motion communicated to matter, he could also combine all that would result from intelligence, freedom of will, and all the faculties which make the essence of spirits; and, before he had formed those spiritual beings which compose the intelligent world, he knew what all their ideas, all their projects, all their deliberations would for ever be.

I am aware, that a particular consequence, which follows this doctrine, hath made some divines exclaim against this thesis, and, under the specious pretence of exculpating the Deity from the entrance of sin into this world, they have affirmed that God could not foresee the determinations of a free agent; for, say they, had he foreseen the abuse which man would have made of his liberty, by resolving to sin, his love to holiness would have engaged him to prevent it. But to reason in this manner is, in attempting to solve a difficulty, to leave that difficulty in all its force.

All they say on this article, proceeds from this principle, that a God infinitely just, and infinitely powerful, ought to display (if it be allowable to say so) all the infinity of his attributes to prevent sin. But this principle is notoriously false. Witness that very permission of sin which is objected to us. You will not acknowledge that God foresaw man's fall into sin: acknowledge, at least, that he foresaw the possibility of man's falling, and that, in forming a creature free, he knew that such a creature might chuse virtue or vice; acknowledge, at least, that God could have created man with so much knowledge, and could have afforded him him so many succours; he could have presented such powerful motives to holiness incessantly, and discovered to him the dreadful consequences of his rebellion so effectually; he

could have united obedience to his commands with so many delights, and the most distant thought of disobedience with so many disgusts; he could have banished from man every temptation to sin, so that he would never have been a sinner. Yet God created man in another manner; consequently it is not true, even in your system, that God hath exerted all the power he could to prevent sin's entrance into the world. Consequently it is false, that a Being, who perfectly loves holiness, ought to display the whole extent of his attributes to prevent sin, and to establish virtue. Consequently, the principle on which you ground your denial of God's comprehension of all the dispositions of spirits, is an unwarrantable principle, and to attempt to solve the difficulty, in this manner, is to leave it in all its force.

But if you consult revelation, you will find that God claims an universal knowledge of spirits. He says, he *searcheth and knoweth them*, Jer. xvii. 10. Rev. ii. 23. He foresaw, he foretold, the afflictions which Abraham's posterity would endure in Canaan, Gen. xv. 13. the hardening of Pharoah, the infidelity of the Jews, the faith of the Gentiles, the crucifixion of the Messiah, Exod. iii. 19. the coming of the *prince* or leader, that is of Vespasian, or Titus, who would *destroy the city and the sanctuary*, Dan. ix. 25, 26. And consequently, we have a right to affirm that God knows all the thoughts of the mind, and all the sentiments of the heart, as well as that he knows all the motions of matter.

Perhaps you wish, my brethren, that our speculations were carried further; perhaps you would have us disentangle the subject from all its difficulties; perhaps you wish we could make you comprehend, in a clear and distinct manner, how it is possible that such immense objects can be always present to the Supreme Intelligence? but what mortal tongue can express such sublime truths, or what capacity is able to conceive them! On this article, we are obliged with our prophet to exclaim, *such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high; I cannot attain unto it!* ver. 6. In general, we conceive that the sphere of divine knowledge is not contracted by any of the limits that confine the spirits of mankind.

The human spirit is united to a portion of matter. Man can perform no operation without the agitation of his brain, without the motion of his animal spirits, without the help of his senses. But the brains wearies, the spirits evaporate, the

senses

senses are blunted, and the minutest alteration of body, clogs the most penetrating and active genius. But God, as we have represented him, thinks, understands, meditates, without brain, without spirits, without any need of senses; not participating their nature, he never participates their alteration, and thus hath intelligence immediately from the treasure of intelligence itself.

The spirit of man owes its existence to a superior spirit, to a foreign cause, to a Being who gives him only such ideas as he thinks proper, and who hath been pleased to conceal numberless mysteries from him. But God, God not only does not owe his existence to a foreign cause, but all that exist derive their existence from him. His ideas were the models of all beings, and he hath only to contemplate himself perfectly to know them.

The spirit of man is naturally a finite spirit; he can consider only one circle of objects at once, many ideas confound him; if he would see too much, he sees nothing, he must successively contemplate what he cannot contemplate in one moment. But God is an infinite spirit; with one single look he beholdeth the whole universe. This is the first idea of the omnipresence of God. As I am accounted present in this auditory, because I see the objects that are here, because I am witness of all that passes here; so God is every where, because he sees all, because veils the most impenetrable, darkness the most thick, distances the most immense, can conceal nothing from his knowledge.—Soar to the utmost heights, fly into the remotest climates, wrap thyself in the blackest darkness, every where, every where, thou wilt be under his eye. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence.*

But, 2. The knowledge of God is not a bare knowledge, his presence is not an idle presence; it is an active knowledge, it is a presence accompanied with action and motion. We said just now, that God was every where, because he *influenced* all, as far as influence could agree with his perfections. Remark this restriction, for as we are discussing a subject the most fertile in controversy, and as, in a discourse of an hour, it is impossible to answer all objections, which may be all answered elsewhere, we would give a general preservative against every mistake. We mean an influence which agrees with the divine perfections; and if from any of our general propositions, you infer any consequences injurious to those perfections, you may conclude, for that very reason,

reason, that you have stretched them beyond their due bounds. We repeat it then, God influenceth all things, as far as such influence agrees with his perfections.

When new beings appear, he is there. He influences their production. He gives to all *life, motion, and being*, Acts xvii. 28. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee*, Neh. ix. 6. *O Lord I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret; and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them*, Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15, 16. *Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.*

When beings are preserved, he is there. He influences their preservation. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thou preservest man and beast*, Psal. xxxvi. 5, 6. *When thou openest thy hand they are filled with good: thou hidest thy face they are troubled, thou takest away their breath they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*, Psal. civ. 28, 29, 30.

When the world is disordered, he is there. He influenceth wars, pestilences, famines, and all the vicissitudes which disorder the world. If nature refuse her productions, it is because he hath *made the heaven as iron, and the earth as brass*, Lev. xxvi. 19. If peace succeed war, he makes both. If *lions slay the inhabitants of Samaria*, it is *the Lord who sends them*, 2 Kings xvii. 25. When tempestuous winds break down those immense banks which your industry has opposed to them, when a devouring fire reduceth your houses to ashes, it is he who *makes the winds his messengers, and his ministers flames of fire*, Psal. civ. 4.

When every thing succeeds according to our wishes, he is there. He influenceth prosperity. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except*

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the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. It is God who giveth his beloved sleep, Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2.

When our understanding is informed, he is there. He influenceth our knowledge. For *in his light we see light,* Psal. xxxvi. 9. *He lighteth every man that cometh into the world,* John i. 9.

When our heart disposeth us to our duties, he is there. He influenceth our virtues. It is he who *worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,* Phil. ii. 13. It is he who *giveth us not only to believe but to suffer for his sake,* chap. i. 29. It is he who *giveth to all that ask him liberally and upbraideth not,* James i. 5.

When the grossest errors cover us, he is there. He influenceth errors. It is God who *sends strong delusions that men should believe a lie,* 2 Thess. ii. 11. *Go make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,* Isa. vi. 10.

When we violate the laws of righteousness, he is there. He influenceth sins, even the greatest sins. Witness Pharaoh, whose *heart he hardened,* Exod. iv. 21. Witness Shimei, whom *the Lord bade to curse David,* 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Witness what Isaiah said, *the Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst of Egypt,* ch. xix. 14.

When magistrates, our earthly gods, consult and deliberate, he is there. He influenceth policy. It is he who *hath the hearts of kings in his hand, and turneth them as the rivers of water,* Prov. xxi. 1. It is he who *giveth kings in his anger, and taketh them away in his wrath,* Hosea xiii. 11. It is he who maketh *the Assyrian the rod of his anger,* Isaiah x. 5. *Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel did what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done,* Acts iv. 27, 28.

When we live, when we die, he is there. He influenceth life and death. *Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with him, he has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass,* Job xiv. 5. *To God the Lord belongs the issues from death,* Psal. lxviii. 20. *He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up,* 1 Sam. ii. 6.

He influences the least events as well as the most considerable. Not being fatigued with the care of great things, he can occupy himself about the smallest without prejudice

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to the rest; *number the hairs of our heads,* and not let even *a sparrow fall without his will,* Matt. x. 29, 30.

But, 3. When God communicates himself to all, when he thus acts on all, when he diffuseth himself thus through the whole, he connects all with his own designs, and makes all serve his own counsels: and this is our third idea of his immensity and omnipresence. God is present with all, because he *directs* all.

Doth he call the creatures into existence? it is to manifest his perfections. It is to have subjects on whom he may shower is favours; it is, as it were, to go out of himself, and to form through the whole universe a concert resounding the Creator's existence and glory. *For the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead are understood by the things that are made,* Rom. i. 20. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard,* Psal. xix. 1, 2, 3.

Doth he preserve his creatures? it is to answer his own designs, the depth of which no finite mind can fathom; but designs which we shall one day know, and admire his wisdom when we know them, as we adore it now, though we know them not.

Doth he send plagues, wars, famines? it is to make those feel his justice who have abused his goodness, it is to avenge the violation of his law, the contempt of his gospel, the forgetting and forsaking of the interest of his church.

Doth he afford us prosperity? it is to *draw us with the bands of love,* Hosea xi. 4. it is to reveal himself to us by that love which is his essence; it is to engage us to imitate him, who *never leaves himself without witness in doing good,* Acts xiv. 17.

Doth he impart knowledge to us? it is to discover the snares that surround us, the miseries that threaten us, the origin from which we sprang, the course of life we should follow, and the end at which we should aim.

Doth he communicate virtues? it is to animate us in our race; it is to convince us that there is a mighty arm to raise us from the abyss into which our natural corruption hath plunged us; it is that we may *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure,* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Doth

Doth he send us error? it is to make us respect that truth which we have resisted.

Doth he abandon us to our vices? it is to punish us for some other vices which we have committed voluntarily and freely; so that, if we could comprehend it, his love for holiness never appears more clearly, than when he abandons men to vice in this manner.

Doth he raise up kings? it is always to oblige them to administer justice, to protect the widow and the orphan, to maintain order and religion. Yet, he often permits them to violate equity, to oppress their people, and to become the scourges of his anger. By them he frequently teacheth us how little account he makes of human grandeurs, seeing he bestows them sometimes upon unworthy men, upon men allured by voluptuousness, governed by ambition, and dazzled with their own glory, upon men who ridicule piety, sell their consciences, negotiate faith and religion, sacrificing the souls of their children to the infamous passions that govern themselves.

Doth he prolong our life? it is because he *is long suffering to us*, 2 Pet. iii. 9. it is because he opens in our favour *the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, to lead us to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4.

Doth he call us to die? it is to open those eternal books in which our actions are registered; it is to gather our souls into his bosom, *to bind them up in the bundle of life*, 1 Sam. xxv. 29. to mix them with the ransomed armies of all *nations, tongues, and people*, Rev. vii. 9.

Such are our ideas of the omnipresence of God. Thus God seeth all, influenceth all, directeth all. In this sense we are to understand this magnificent language of scripture. *Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee*, 1 Kings viii. 27. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool*, Isa. lxvi. 1. *Where is the house that ye build unto me? do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? am I God at hand, and not a far off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. This is what the heathens had a glimpse of, when they said, that God was a circle, the centre of which was every where, and its circumference no where. That all things were full of Jupiter. That he filled all his works. That, fly whither we would, we were always before his eyes. This is what the followers

of Mahomet meant, when they said, that where there were two persons, God made the third: where there were three, God made the fourth. Above all, this was our prophet's meaning throughout the Psalm, a part of which we have explained. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known "me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising, "thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compas- "sest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with "all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but "lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast be- "set me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain "unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither "shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, "thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou "art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell "in the uttermost part of the sea; even there shall thy hand "lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be "light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, "but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the "light are both alike to thee," ver. 1, &c.

But perhaps, during the course of this meditation, you may have murmured at our presenting an object, of which all the preaching in the world can give you only imperfect ideas. Suspend your judgments we are going to shew you whither this discourse, all glimmering as it is, ought to conduct you. We are going to see what salutary consequences follow our efforts, even the weak efforts, that we have been making to explain the grandeur and omnipresence of God. Let us pass to the conclusion, the chief design of this discourse.

1. Our first reflection is on *the difficulties we meet with in fixing our minds on such subjects as we have been hearing.* You have doubtless experienced, if you have endeavoured to follow us, that you are weary, and wander when you would go beyond matter. Our minds find almost nothing real, where they meet with nothing sensible. As if the whole essence of beings were corporeal, the mind loseth its way when it ceaseth to be directed by bodies, and it needs the help of imagination to represent even those things which are not susceptible of images; and yet whatever is most grand and noble in the nature of beings is spirit. The sublimest objects, angels who are continually before God, *seraphims*

raphims who *cover their faces*, in his presence, Isa. vi. 2, cherubims who are the ministers of his will, *thousand thousands which minister unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand which stand before him*, Dan. vii. 10. what is most glorious in man, what elevates him above other animals, a soul made in the image of God himself; the Being of beings, the Sovereign Beauty: all these beings are spiritual, abstract, free from sense and matter. Moreover, what pleases and enchants us in bodies, even that comes from a subject abstract, spiritual and corporeal. Without your soul, aliments have no taste, flowers no smell, the earth no enamel, fire no heat, the stars no brilliancy, the sun no light. Matter of itself is void, and gross, destitute of all the qualities with which our imagination clothes it, and which are proper to our souls. What ought we to conclude from this reflection? My brethren, have you no idea of your dignity, and primitive grandeur? Have you not even yet some faint resemblances of beings formed in the Creator's image? you ought, feeble as you are, confined as you are in a manner to matter, you should deplore your misery, you should groan under that necessity, which, in some sort, confounds your souls with a little dust, you should sigh after that happy state in which your rapid, free and unclogged spirits shall meditate like themselves. This is the first duty we should prescribe to you.

2. Our next reflection is on *the majesty of our religion.* That must certainly be thought the true religion which gives us the noblest ideas of God. Let our religion be judged by this rule. Where do we see the attributes of the Supreme Being placed in so clear a light? what can be more noble than this idea of God? what can be conceived more sublime than a Being whom nothing escapes, before whom *all things are naked and open*, Heb. iv. 13. who, by one single look, fully comprehends all beings past, present, and to come, all that do exist, all that possibly can exist? who thinks, in the same instant, with equal facility on bodies and spirits, on all the dimensions of time and of matter? What more noble can be conceived than a Being who imparteth himself to all, diffuseth himself through all, influenceth all, giveth life and motion to all? What can be conceived more noble than a Being who directeth the conduct of the whole universe, who knoweth how to make all concur to his designs, who knoweth how to connect alike with the laws of order and equity, the virtues of the righteous, the vices of the wicked, the praises of the happy, the blasphemies of the

victims sacrificed to his vengeance in hell? When we find in any heathen philosopher, amidst a thousand false notions, amidst a thousand wild imaginations, some few leaves of the flowers with which our bibles are strewed, we are ready to cry a miracle, a miracle, we transmit these shreds of the Deity (if I may be allowed to speak so) to the most distant posterity, and these ideas, all defective, and all defiled as they are, procure their authors immortal reputation. On this principle, what respect, what veneration, what deference ought we to have for the Patriarchs and the Prophets, for the Evangelists and the Apostles, who spoke of God in so sublime a manner! However, be not surprized at their superiority over the great pagan geniusses: had the biblical writers, like them, been guided only by human reason, like them they would have wandered too. If they spoke so nobly of God, it was because they had received that *spirit who searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God,* 1 Cor. ii. 10. It was because *all scripture was given by inspiration,* 2 Tim. iii. 16. It was because *the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* 2 Pet. i. 21.

3. Make a third reflection. *This attribute of God removes the greatest stumbling-blocks that sceptics and infidels pretend to meet with in religion.* It justifies all those dark mysteries which are above the comprehension of our feeble reason. We would not make use of this reflection to open a way for human fancies, and to authorize every thing that is presented to us under the idea of the marvellous. All doctrines that are incomprehensible are not divine, nor ought we to embrace any opinion merely because it is beyond our knowledge. But when a religion, in other respects, hath good guarantees, when we have good arguments to prove that such a revelation comes from heaven, when we certainly know that it is God who speaks, ought we to be surprized, if ideas of God, which come so fully authenticated, absorb and confound us? I freely grant, that, had I consulted my own reason only, I could not have discovered some mysteries of the gospel. Nevertheless, when I think on the immensity of God, when I cast my eyes on that vast ocean, when I consider that immense all, nothing astonishes me, nothing stumbles me, nothing seems to me inadmissible, how incomprehensible soever it may be. When the subject is divine, I am ready to believe all, to admit all, to receive all;

all; provided I be convinced that it is God himself who speaks to me, or any one on his part. After this I am no more astonished that there are three distinct persons in one divine essence; one God, and yet a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost. After this, I am no more astonished that God foresees all without forcing any; permits sin without forcing the sinner; ordains free and intelligent creatures to such and such ends, yet without destroying their intelligence, or their liberty. After this, I am no more astonished, that the justice of God required a satisfaction proportional to his greatness, that his own love hath provided that satisfaction, and that God, from the abundance of his compassion, designed the mystery of an incarnate God; a mystery which angels admire while sceptics oppose; a mystery which absorbs human reason, but which fills all heaven with songs of praise; a mystery which is the *great mystery*, by excellence, 1 Tim. iii. 16. but the greatness of which nothing should make us reject, since religion proposeth it as the grand effort of the wisdom of the incomprehensible God, and commandeth us to receive it on the testimony of the incomprehensible God himself. Either religion must tell us nothing about God, or what it tells us must be beyond our capacities, and, in discovering even the borders of this immense ocean, it must needs exhibit a vast extent in which our feeble eyes are lost. But what surprizes me, what stumbles me, what frightens me, is to see a diminutive creature, a contemptible man, a little ray of light glimmering through a few feeble organs, controvert a point with the Supreme Being, oppose that Intelligence who sitteth at the helm of the world; question what he affirms, dispute what he determines, appeal from his decisions, and, even after God hath given evidence, reject all doctrines that are beyond his capacity. Enter into thy nothingness, mortal creature. What madness animates thee? How darest thou pretend, thou who art but a point, thou whose essence is but an atom, to measure thyself with the Supreme Being, with him who fills heaven and earth, with him whom *heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain?* 1 Kings viii. 27. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? high as heaven what canst thou do? deeper than hell what canst thou know?* Job xi. 7. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof: Lo these*

these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding, ch. xxvi. 7. 11. 14. *Who hath laid the measures thereof? who hath stretched the line upon it? whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Who shut up the sea with doors, when I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swadling band for it? when I brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?* ch. xxxviii. 1, 2, 3, &c. *He that reproveth God let him answer this*, ch. xl. 2. *O Lord, such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain unto it!*

4. But, my brethren, shall these be the only inferences from our text? shall we reap only speculations from this discourse? shall we only believe, admire, and exclaim? Ah! from this idea of God I see *all the virtues issue which religion prescribes!*

If such be the grandeur of the God I adore, miserable wretch! what ought my *repentance* to be! I, a contemptible worm, I, a creature whom God could tread beneath his feet, and crush into dust by a single act of his will, I have rebelled against the great God, I have endeavoured to *provoke him to jealousy*, as if I had been *stronger than he*, 1 Cor. x. 22. I have insulted that Majesty which the angels of heaven adore; I have attacked God, with madness and boldness, on his throne, and in his empire. Is it possible to feel remorses too cutting for sins which the majesty of the offended, and the littleness of the offender, make so very atrocious?

If such be the grandeur of God, what should our *humility* be! Grandees of the world, mortal divinities, who swell with vanity in the presence of God, oppose yourselves to the immense God. Behold his eternal ideas, his infinite knowledge, his general influence, his universal direction; enter his immense ocean of perfections and virtues, what are ye? a grain of dust, a point, an atom, a nothing.

If such be the grandeur of God, what ought our *confidence* to be! *If God be for us, who can be against us?* Rom. viii.

viii. 31. Poor creature, tossed about the world, as by so many winds, by hunger, by sickness, by persecution, by misery, by nakedness, by exile; fear not in a vessel of which God himself is the pilot.

But above all, if such be the grandeur of God, if God be every where present, what should our *vigilance* be! and, to return to the idea with which we began, what impression should this thought make on reasonable souls! *God seeth me. When thou wast under the fig-tree*, said Jesus Christ to Nathaniel, *I saw thee*, John i. 48. See Eccles. iii. 23, 24, 25. We do not know what Jesus Christ saw under the fig-tree, nor is it necessary now to inquire: but it was certainly something which, Nathaniel was fully persuaded, no mortal eye had seen. As soon, therefore, as Jesus Christ had uttered these words, he believed, and said, *Rabbi, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.* My brethren, God useth the same language to each of you to-day: *when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.*

Thou hypocrite, when wrapped in a veil of religion, embellished with exterior piety, thou concealedst an impious heart, and didst endeavour to impose on God and man, *I saw thee.* I penetrated all those labyrinths, I dissipated all those darknesses, I dived into all thy deep designs.

Thou worldling, who, with a prudence truly infernal, hast the art of giving a beautiful tint to the most odious objects; who appearest not to hate thy neighbour, because thou dost not openly attack him; not to falsify thy promise, because thou hast the art of eluding it; not to oppress thy dependents, because thou knowest how to impose silence on them: *I saw thee*, when thou gavest those secret stabs, when thou didst receive those bribes, and didst accumulate those wages of unrighteousness, which cry for vengeance against thee.

Thou slave to sensuality, ashamed of thine excesses before the face of the sun, *I saw thee*; when, with bars and bolts, with obscurity and darkness, and complicated precautions, thou didst hide thyself from the eyes of men, *defile the temple of God, and make the members of Christ the members of a harlot*, 1 Cor. vi. 15.

My brethren, the discourses, which we usually preach to you, absorb your minds in a multitude of ideas. A collection of moral ideas perhaps confound instead of instructing you, and when we attempt to engage you in too many reflections, you enter really into none. Behold an epitome of religion.

religion. Behold a morality in three words. Return to your houses, and every where carry this reflection with you, *God seeth me, God seeth me.* To all the wiles of the devil, to all the snares of the world, to all the baits of sin, oppose this reflection, *God seeth me.* If, clothed with a human form, he were always in your path, were he to follow you to every place, were he always before you with his majestic face, with eyes flashing with lightning, with looks inspiring terror, dare ye before his august presence give a loose to your passions? But you have been hearing that his majestic face is every where, those sparkling eyes do inspect you in every place, those terrible looks do consider you every where. Particularly, in the ensuing week, while you are preparing for the Lord's supper, recollect this. Let each examine his own heart, and endeavour to search into his conscience, where he may discover so much weakness, so much corruption, so much hardness, so many unclean sources overflowing with so many excesses, and let this idea strike each of you, *God seeth me.* God seeth me, as I see myself, unclean, ungrateful, and rebellious. O may this idea produce contrition and sorrow, a just remorse and a sound conversion, a holy and a fervent communion, crowned with graces and virtues. Happy, if, after our examination, we have a new heart! a heart agreeable to those eyes that search and try it! Happy, if, after our communion, after a new examination, we can say with the prophet, *O Lord, thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast tried me, and hast found nothing*, Psal. xvii. 3. So be it. To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

THE GRANDEUR OF GOD.

ISAIAH xl. 12 to 28.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted, yea, they shall not be sown, yea,

their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirl-wind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the Lord is the everlasting God?

THE words, the lofty words of the text, require two sorts of observations: the first are necessary to explain and confirm the prophet's notions of God; the second to determine and to inforce his design in describing the Deity with so much pomp.

The prophet's *notions* of God are diffused through all the verses of the text. *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure? Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket. Behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.*

The prophet's *design* in describing the Deity with so much magnificence is to discountenance idolatry, of which there are two sorts. The first, I call religious idolatry, which consists in rendering that religious worship to a creature, which is due to none but God. The second, I call moral idolatry, which consists in distrusting the promises of God in dangerous crises, and in expecting that assistance from men which cannot be expected from God. In order to discountenance idolatry in religion, the prophet contents himself with describing it. *The workman melteth a graven image, the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold.*

For the purpose of discrediting idolatry in morals, he opposeth the grandeur of God to the most grand objects among men, I mean earthly kings. *God*, saith the prophet, *bringeth the princes to nothing, he shall blow upon them, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. Why sayest*

sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? and so on.

This subject may seem perhaps too copious for one discourse, however, it will not exceed the limits of this; and we will venture to detain you a moment, before we attend to the matter, in remarking the manner, that is, the style of our prophet, and the expressive sublimity of our text. It is a composition, which not only surpasses the finest passages of the most celebrated profane authors, but perhaps exceeds the loftiest parts of the holy scriptures.

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? Who hath meted out heaven with a span? Who hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure? Who hath weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? All nations before him are as the drop of a bucket. He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. What loftiness of expression! The deference we pay to the sacred writers is not founded on the beauty of their diction. They do not affect to come to us *with the enticing words of man's wisdom*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. We cannot help observing, however, in some of their writings, the most perfect models of eloquence. God seems to have dispensed talents of this kind, in the same manner as he hath sometimes bestowed temporal blessings of another kind. Riches and grandeurs are too mean, and too unsatisfying to constitute the felicity of a creature formed in the image of God. Immortal men, who are called to participate felicity and glory with their God, are indifferent to the part they act, during their short existence on the stage of time. To them it is a matter of very little importance, whether they occupy the highest or the lowest, the most conspicuous or the most obscure posts in society. It signifies but little to them, whether they ride in sumptuous equipages or walk on foot. To them it is a matter of very little consequence, whether superb processions attend their funerals, or their carcasses be laid in their graves without pomp and parade. Yet, when it pleaseth God to signalize any by gifts of this kind, he doth it like a God, if you will allow the expression, he doth it so as to shew that his mighty hands hold all that can contribute to ennoble, and to elevate mankind. Observe his munificence to Solomon. *I have given thee riches and glory*, said the Lord to him, *so that there shall not be*

any among the kings like unto thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee, 1 Kings iii. 12, 13. In virtue of this promise, God loaded Solomon with temporal blessings: he gave him all. In virtue of this promise, *silver was no more esteemed than stones in Jerusalem* (the capital of this favourite of heaven) *nor the cedars of Lebanon than the sycamore trees of the plain,* 2 Chron. ix. 27.

God hath observed the same conduct to the heralds of religion, in regard to the talents that form an orator. The truths they teach are too serious, and too interesting, to need the help of ornaments. The *treasures* of religion, which God committed to them, are so valuable, that it is needless for us to examine whether they be presented to us in *earthen vessels,* 2 Cor. iv. 7. But when the holy Spirit deigns to distinguish any one of his servants by gifts of this kind, my God! with what a rich profusion hath he the power of doing it! He fires the orator's imagination with a flame altogether divine; he elevates his ideas to the least accessible region of the universe, and dictates language above mortal mouths.

What kind of elocution can you alledge, of which the sacred authors have not given us the most perfect models?

Is it the style proper for history? A historian must assume, it should seem, as many different forms of speaking as there are different events in the subjects of his narration. And who ever gave such beautiful models of this style as Moses? Witness these words, which have acquired him the elogium of a pagan critic: * *God said, Let there be light, and there was light,* Gen. i. 3. Witness these, *Isaac said, My father; Abraham answered, Here am I my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering,* chap. xxii. 7, 8. Witness these words: *Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me: and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he lifted up his voice and wept, and said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? Come near to me, I pray you, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt,* chap. xlv. 1.

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* Longinus, Sect. ix.

Is it the tender style? Who ever gave such beautiful models as the prophet Jeremiah? Witness the pathetic descriptions, and the affecting complaints in the Lamentations: *The ways of Zion mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts · All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh: her virgins are afflicted: and she is in bitterness. Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down,* ch. i. 4, 12, 16.

Is it a style proper to terrify and confound? Who ever gave more beautiful models of this style than Ezekiel? Witness, among many others, these expressions: *How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou dost all these things: the work of an imperious whorish woman? A wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom,* chap. xvi. 30, 32, 33.

Above all, is it the lofty, noble, and sublime style? Whose models are comparable to the prophet Isaiah's? Christian preacher, thou who studiest to convince, to persuade, to carry away the hearts of the people to whom God hath sent thee, neither make Cicero nor Demosthenes thy models; investigate the ideas, and appropriate the language of the inspired writers.—Heat thine imagination at the fire which inflamed them, and with them, endeavour to elevate thy mind to the mansions of God, *to the light which no man can approach unto,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. Learn of these great masters to handle *the sword of the Spirit,* and to manage *the word of God quick and powerful, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,* Heb. iv. 12.

But, when I propose my text as a pattern of elocution, far from your minds be the idea of a trifling orator's fraudful art, whose ambition it is to exceed his subject, and to lend his hero the virtues he wants. The portrait drawn by the prophet is infinitely inferior to his original. You will be fully convinced of this, if you attend to the four following considerations of the grandeurs of God.

1. The sublimity of his essence. 2. The immensity of his works. 3. The efficiency of his will. 4. The magnificence of some of his mighty acts, at certain periods, in favour of his church.

First,

First, *The sublimity of his essence.* The prophet's mind was filled with this object. It is owing to this that he repeats the grand title of *Jehovah*, THE LORD, which signifies *I am* by excellence, and which distinguisheth, by four grand characters, the essence of God, from the essence of creatures.

1. The Essence of God is *independent in its cause.* God is a self-existent being. We exist, but ours is only a borrowed existence, for existence is foreign from us. There was time when we were not, and our origin is nothing: and as we should cease to be if God were only to give the word, so his word was necessary to give us existence at first. But God exists of himself: Existence is his own: and he owes it only to himself, and to the eminence of his own perfections. An idea, in which it is difficult not to lose one's self, and which is incomprehensible to us, because it relates to an infinite attribute, and because all that is infinite absorbs a finite mind: but an idea, however, as true as it is incomprehensible. The existence of a mite, or of a grain of dust, or even of the most diminutive being in nature, is sufficient necessarily to conduct us to the independent, self-existent God.

Even the atheist is obliged by his own principles to agree with us in this article: I mean the atheist of some knowledge: the modern atheist. Let us thankfully own, my brethren, that the improvements, which a sound philosophy hath produced in the sciences, have been communicated even to atheism. Formerly, atheists could digest such propositions as these: the world hath not always subsisted; it was made of nothing. Now, these propositions are too gross for any to hazard his reputation on the advancing of them. Indeed, to affirm, that nothing hath made the world, is not only to advance an absurdity, it is to advance a contradiction. To say that nothing hath created the world, is to say that nothing hath not created the world, and to say that nothing hath not created a world, which actually exists, is to deny the existence of the world. No rules of reasoning require us to answer people, who contradict themselves in so glaring a manner; and, on this article, we rank them with ideots. Modern atheists admit, as we do, a self-existent being. All the difference between them and us is this; they attribute this eminent perfection to matter; but we attribute it to God. The atheist derives his existence from a collection of atoms, which a blind chance had assembled:

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we ascribe our existence to a Being possessed of all possible perfections. The atheist discovers his God and Creator in a confused conjunction of bodies destitute of reason: we find out God and Creator in the Supreme Being, the fountain of all existence. But both we and the atheist are obliged to own an increated, self-existent Being. And as it is easy for a reasonable person to decide the question, whether this perfection agree to God or to matter, it is easy for him also to comprehend that God is a self-existent Being.

2. The Essence of God is *universal in its extent.* God possesseth the reality of every thing that exists. A celebrated infidel, educated in your provinces*, (would to God none were educated here still!) This infidel, I say, invented a new way of publishing atheism, by disguising it. I mistake in saying *new*; for it would be easy to prove, that the miserable Spinoza had not the glory of inventing it; he only revived a pagan notion†. He says that there is a God, but that this God is only the universality and assemblage of creatures: that every being is a modification of God; that the sun is God as giving light, that aliments are God, as affording nourishment; and so of the rest. What a system! What an abominable system! But this system, all abominable as it is, hath however, some truth, or some foundation. God is not diffused through all these different beings: God is not divided: but he possesseth all the perfections of the universe, and it is by this notion of God, that the true religion is distinguished from superstition. The superstitious, struck with the beauty of some particular being, made that being the object of their adoration. One, struck with the beauty of the stars, said, the stars were gods. Another, astonished at the splendour of the sun, said, the sun was God. Democritus, surprized at the beauty of fire, said God was material fire. Chrysippus, amazed at the beauty of that necessity, which causeth every thing to answer its destination, said, God was fate. Parmenides, affected with the beautiful extent of heaven and earth, said, God was that extent.

But

* Benedict de Spinoza was born at Amsterdam, and was educated in the same city under Francis Vander Ende. Him Mons. Saurin means.

† See Dr. Clarke on the Attributes. Vol. 1. prop. 3.

But God is all this, because he eminently possesseth all this. An ancient heathen said of Camillus, that he was the whole Roman republic to him: and Toxaris, when he had procured Anacharsis the acquaintance of Solon, said to him: *This is Athens, this is Greece; thou art no longer a stranger, thou hast seen the whole.* Let us sanctify this thought by applying it to God. God is all the Roman republic, all Greece, the whole world and all its inhabitants. Yes, he is the beauty of the stars, the brightness of the sun, the purity of fire, the subtilty of ethereal matter, the expanse of heaven and the law of fate; he is the sagacity of the politician, the penetration of the philosopher, the bravery of the soldier, the undaunted courage, and the cautious coolness of the general. If, among these qualities, there be any incompatible with the purity of his essence, and therefore inapplicable to him, yet in this sense they belong to him, all are subject to his empire, and act only by his will. He is, as an ancient writer expresseth it, a boundless ocean of existence. From this ocean of existence all created beings, like so many rivulets, flow. From this ocean of light proceeded the sun with its brightness, the stars with their glitter, along with all the brilliancies of other beings that approach their nature. From this ocean of wisdom come those profound politicians, who penetrate the deepest recesses of the human heart; hence those sublime philosophers, who explore the heavens by the marvels of dioptricks, and descend into the bowels of the earth by their knowledge of nature; and hence all those superior geniusses, who cultivate the sciences, and the liberal arts, and who constitute the beauty of the intelligent world. *In him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28. We breathe his air, and we are animated by his spirit; it is his power that upholds, his knowledge that informs, and his wisdom that conducts us.

3. The Essence of God is *unchangeable in its exercise.* Creatures only pass from nothing to existence, and from existence to nothing. Their existence is rather a continual variation than a permanent state; and they are all carried away with the same vicissitudes. Hardly are we children before we become men: hardly are we arrived at manhood before we become old; and as soon as we become old we die. We love to-day what we hated yesterday, and to-morrow we shall hate what to-day we love. David hath given us a just definition of man. He defines him a phantom, who only

only *appears*, and who appears only in *a vain show*, Psalm xxxix. 6. But *I the Lord change not:* Mal. iii. 6. *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, Heb. xiii. 8. He is, as it were, the fixed point, on which revolve all the creatures in the universe, without partaking himself of their revolutions.

4. Finally, the divine Essence is *eternal in its duration: Hast thou known*, saith our prophet, *that he is the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth?* When we attempt to measure the duration of God, by tracing it beyond the first periods of this universe, we lose ourselves in the unfathomable depths of eternity: we heap ages upon ages, millions of years upon millions of years: but no beginning of his existence can we find. And when we endeavour to stretch our thoughts, and to penetrate the most remote futurity, again we heap ages upon ages, millions of years upon millions of years, and lose ourselves again in the abyss, perceiving, that he can have no end, as he had no beginning. He is *the Ancient of Days*, Dan. vii. 9. *The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last; he is, he was, he is to come*, Rev. i. 8. *Before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth and the world were formed, even from everlasting to everlasting he is God*, Psal. xc. 2. And when the mountains shall be dissolved, when the foundations of the earth shall be destroyed, when all sensible objects shall be *folded up like a vesture*, Heb. i. 12. he will be *the everlasting God*, will be, when they exist no more, as he was before they existed at all.

Secondly, Having judged of the grandeur of God by the sublimity of his essence, judge of it by *the immensity of his works*. The prophet invites us to this meditation in the words of my text. *It is he that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. It is he who bringeth out their host by number, he calleth them all by names. By the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth.* But who can pretend to discuss, in a single article of one sermon, a subject, which whole volumes could not contain? For if there be a subject, in which simple narration resembles rhetorical bombast, it is undoubtedly this.

A novice is frightened at hearing what astronomers assert; that the sun is a million times bigger than the earth: that the naked eye discovers more than a thousand fixed stars, which

are so many suns to enlighten unknown systems: that with the help of glasses we may discover an almost infinite number: that two thousand have been reckoned in one constellation; and that, without exaggerating, they may be numbered at more than two millions: that what are called nebulous stars, of which there is an innumerable multitude, that appear to us as if they were involved in little misty clouds, are all assemblages of stars.

A novice is frightened, when he is told, that there is such a prodigious distance between the earth and the sun, that a body, moving with the greatest rapidity that art could produce, would take up twenty-five years in passing from the one to the other: that it would take up seven hundred and fifty thousand to pass from the earth to the nearest of the fixed stars: and to the most distant more than a hundred millions of years.

A novice is frightened: (do not accuse me, my brethren, of wandering from the subject of this discourse, for the saints, who are proposed in scripture as patterns to us, cherished their devotions with meditations of this kind: at the sight of these grand objects they exclaimed, *O Lord, when we consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?* Psal. viii. 3, 4. And my text engageth me to fix your attention upon these objects: *lift up your eyes on high and behold.*) A novice is frightened, when he is assured, that, although the stars, which form a constellation, seem to touch one another, yet the distance of those that are nearest together cannot be ascertained, and that even words are wanting to express the spaces which separate those that are at the greatest distances from each other: that if two men were observing two fixed stars, from two parts of the earth, the most distant from each other, the lines that went from their eyes, and terminated on that star, would be confounded together; that it would be the same with two men, were one of them on the earth, and the other in the sun, though the sun and the earth are at such a prodigious distance from each other; so inconsiderable is that distance in comparison of the space which separates both from the star. All this startles a novice: and yet, what are these bodies, countless in their number, and enormous in their size? What are these unmeasurable spaces, which absorb our senses

senses and imaginations? What are all these in comparison of what reason discovers? Shall we be puerile enough to persuade ourselves that there is nothing beyond what we see? Have we not reason to think, that there are spaces far, far beyond, full of the Creator's wonders, and affording matter of contemplation to *the thousand thousands*, to the *ten thousand times ten thousand* intelligences that he hath made? Dan. vii. 10.

Here let us pause. Over all this universe God reigns. But what is man even in the comparison of this earth? "Let "him reflect on himself," (I borrow the words of a modern author) "let him consider what he is in comparison of "the whole that exists beside: let him regard himself as "confined in this obscure by-corner of nature: and from the "appearance of the little dungeon where he is lodged, that is, "of this visible world, let him learn to estimate the world, "its kingdoms, and himself at their real value." Isaiah estimates their real value in the words of my text. *Behold*, says he, *all nations before him are as a drop of a bucket:* they are of no more value than *the small dust* that cleaves to *the balance: God sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers:* yea, they are still less considerable, *all nations before him are as nothing.*

Thirdly. The immensity of the Creator's works leads us to *the efficiency of his will:* and the idea of the real world conducts us to that of the possible world. There needs no train of propositions to discover a connection between what God hath done, and what he can do. The idea of a creature leads to that of a Creator: for, in supposing that some beings have been created, we suppose an author of their creation. The idea of a creative Being includes the idea of a Being whose will is efficient: for as soon as you suppose a creative Being, you suppose a Being whose will is self-efficient. But a Being, whose will is self-efficient, is a Being who, by a single act of his will, can create all possible beings: that is, all the existence of which implies no contradiction; there being no reason for limiting the power of a will that hath been once efficient of itself. So that as soon as you conceive a Being who hath once created, you conceive a Being who can always create.

Let us then form this notion of God: a Being who, by a single act of his will, can create now in empty space, as he hath formerly created. He can say, of light which doth not

exist, what he once said of that which doth exist, *Let there be light;* and there shall be light, like that which actually is. He can say, of luminaries which are not, what he hath said of luminaries which already are, *Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven;* and luminaries, that are not, shall be, as those that once were not are now, and will owe their existence to that will, which is always irresistible, and always efficient; or, as the prophet saith in the words of my text, *to the greatness of his might*, to the *strength of his power.*

Lastly, to convince you of the grandeur of God, I am to remark to you *the magnificence of some of his mighty acts, at certain periods, in favour of his church.* The prophet had two of these periods in view. The first was the return of the Jews from that captivity in Babylon which he had denounced: and the second, the coming of the Messiah, of which their return from captivity was only a shadow.

What wonders did God work in the first of these periods! Nebuchadnezzar, the tyrant of the Jews, had obtained universal monarchy, or as the prophet Jeremiah expresseth it, he was become *the hammer of the whole earth*, chap. l. 23. The inspired writers represent the rapidity of his victories under the emblem of the swiftness of an eagle. We can hardly imagine the speed with which he over-ran Ethiopia, Arabia, Palestine, Persia, Media, Egypt, Idumea, Syria, and almost all Asia, and with which he conquered all those extensive countries as he marched through them. Cyrus had been appointed by the Lord, and nominated by the prophets, to stop his career, and to subdue those Babylonians, who had subdued so many nations. But who was this Cyrus? Son of a father, whose meanness and obscurity had prevailed with Astyages, king of Media, to give him his daughter Mandana in marriage; how will he perform such prodigious enterprizes? This is not all: Astyages was afraid that Mandana's son should fulfil a dream, of which his diviners had given him frightful interpretations. He caused her therefore to reside at court during her pregnancy, and commanded Harpagus, one of his most devoted courtiers, to put the child to death as soon as he should be born. But God preserved the child, and all the power of Astyages could not make one hair fall from his head without the Divine permission. Harpagus trembled at his commission, resigned it to the overseer of the king's flocks, and ordered him to expose Mandana's son: but when he was preparing to obey him, his wife,

wife, affected with the beauty of young Cyrus, prevailed with her husband to expose her own son in his stead.

Thus, by a train of miracles, was this *anointed of God* preserved, and by a train of greater miracles still, did he stir up the Persians against the Medes, march at the head of them against the cruel Astyages, defeat him, conquer Media, and at length besiege Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had surrounded that city with a triple wall, and had replaced the bricks of Semiramis with freestone, which contributed, says Dion, less to the magnificence than to the eternity of the empire. The walls were an hundred feet high, and fifty broad, so that it was said of that great city, it was alike incredible how art could form, or art destroy it. But what walls, what fortifications, can resist the blows of an arm supported by *the greatness of the might, the strength of the power* of the omnipotent God! Every thing submits to the valour of Cyrus: he takes Babylon, and before he hath well secured his conquest, does homage for the victory to the God who had foretold it; and releases the Jews from captivity. These accounts are related by heathen authors, and particularly by Herodotus, and Justin: God having determined that the bitterest enemies of revelation should preserve those monuments which demonstrate the divinity of our prophecies.

But I said just now, that the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, was only a shadow of that deliverance which the Messiah was to bring into the world: and that the mighty acts, which God wrought in the first period, were only faint images of what he would operate in the second. Accordingly, our prophet had the second of these periods much more in view than the first in the words of my text. It is not a love for the marvellous: it is neither a prejudice of education, nor a blind submission to confessions of faith; (motives that produce so much superstition among christians) these are not the reasons of our comment: it is the nature of the thing; it is the magnificence of the prophecies connected with my text; it is the authority of St. Paul, who, in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, ver. 34. and in the second of his first epistle to the Corinthians, ver. 16. interprets these words of my text of the gospel, *Who hath known the mind of the Lord? who hath been his counsellor?* Accordingly, in this second period, God hath displayed treasures of wisdom and knowledge. But we have elsewhere treated this subject at large, and we chuse rather only

only to hint this article to day than to incur the just reproach of treating of it imperfectly.

Such then are the grandeurs of God; and all that I have lisped out is more properly the title of the subject, upon which I would fix your attention, than the subject itself well digested. Nevertheless, how imperfect soever the sketch may be, it may serve to convince us, that there is no extravagance in the prophet's ideas; that if his language is lofty, it is not hyperbolical, and that he is always below the truth, even when he uses these sublime expressions, *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand? meted the heavens with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth with a measure, weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?* But why doth he describe the Deity with so much pomp? This remains to be considered in the second part of this discourse, which shall also be the application.

II. We observed in the beginning, that the prophet's design was to render two sorts of idolatry odious: idolatry in religion; and idolatry in morals.

Idolatry in religion consists in rendering those religious homages to creatures, which are due to the Creator only. To discredit this kind of idolatry, the prophet contents himself with describing it. He shames the idolater by reminding him of the origin of idols, and of the pains taken to preserve them. What is the origin of idols? *The workman melteth an image*, saith our prophet, *and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold.* What pains doth the idolater take to preserve his idols? He *casteth silver chains* to fasten them, and to prevent thieves from stealing them, or perhaps for fear they should escape through their own inconstancy. The heathens had been accustomed, when they besieged a city, to evoke the tutelary gods; (Macrobius has preserved a long form of these evocations *) and the besieged, to prevent the effects of these evocations, and to secure their gods from going into their enemies camps, used to fasten their images with chains. Many proofs of this might be alledged, but

* Saturn. III. 9. The following is the form of the incantation:—"If you be a god or a goddess, under whose guardianship the people and the city of the Carthaginians is, and you, particularly, who have taken upon you the protection of that people and city, I worship you, and humbly beg you would be pleased to forsake the people and city of the Carthaginians, to abandon their places, temples, religious ceremonies, and cities, and come away," &c.—*Bayle. Soranus. Rem. E.*

but one passage of Quintus Curtius shall suffice. He tells us, that a citizen of Tyre having publicly declared that he had seen in a dream the image of Appollo quitting the city, the citizens immediately used the precaution of fastening it with a chain of gold*.

But the prophet no less intended to shame idolatry in morals, which consists in distrusting the promises of God in extreme dangers, and in expecting from men a succour that cannot be expected from God. A man is guilty of moral idolatry, when in dangerous crises he says, *My way is hid from the Lord; my judgment is passed over from my God.* Be not surprized at my giving so odious a name to a disposition of mind, which is too common even among those whose piety is the least suspected, and the best established. The essence of idolatry, in general, is to disrobe the Deity of his perfections, and to adorn a creature with them. There are indeed many degrees of this disposition. He who renders divine honours to the glimmering light of a taper, is guilty perhaps of a more gross idolatry, than he who worships the sun. The Egyptian who worships a rat, is perhaps more absurd than the Roman, who ranks a Cæsar with the Gods. But after all, there is so small a difference between the meanest insect and the greatest emperor, the glimmering of a taper and the glory of the sun, when compared with the Supreme Being, that there can be no great difference between these two sorts of idolatry.

Let us apply this to our subject. God is the sole arbiter of events. Whenever you think, that any more powerful being directs them to comfort you, you put the creature in the Creator's place; whether you do it in a manner more or less absurd: whether they be formidable armies, impregnable fortresses, and well-stored magazines, which you thus exalt into deities; or whether it be a small circle of friends, an easy income, or a country house; it does not signify, you are alike idolaters.

The Jews were often guilty of the first sort of idolatry. The captivity in Babylon was the last curb to that fatal propensity. But this miserable people, whose existence and preservation, whose prosperities and adversities were one continued train of obvious miracles, immediately from heaven; this miserable people, whose whole history should have prevailed

* L. IV. 3. 21. Metu aureæ catena devinxere simulacrum, aræque Herculis, cujus numini urbem dicaverant, inseruere vinculum, quasi illo Deo Apollinem retenturi.

vailed with them to have feared God only, and to have confided in him entirely; this miserable people trembled at Nebuchadnezzar and his army, as if both had acted independently on God. Their imaginations prostrated themselves before these second causes, and they shuddered at the sight of the Chaldean Marmosets, as if they had afforded assistance to their worshippers, and had occasioned their triumphs over the church.

Thanks be to God, my dear brethren, the light of the gospel hath opened the eyes of a great number of christians, in regard to idolatry in religion. I say a great number, and not all: for how many parts of the christian world still deserve the prophet's reproach? *The workman melteth a graven image, the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold. Have you not known? have you heard?* Blessed be God, we are quite free from this kind of idolatry! But how many idolaters of the second kind do I see?

You, who in order to avert public calamities, satisfy yourselves with a few precautions of worldly prudence, and oppose provisions to scarcity, medicines to mortality, an active vigilance to the danger of a contagion; and take no pains to extirpate those horrible crimes, which provoke the vengeance of heaven to inflict punishments on public bodies; you are guilty of this second kind of idolatry; you stand exposed to this malediction, *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*, Jer. xvii. 5. Were your confidence placed in God, you would endeavour to avert national judgments by purging the state of those scandalous commerces, those barbarous extortions, and all those other wicked practices, which are the surest forerunners, and the principal causes of famine, and pestilence, and war.

Desolate family, you, who rested all your expectations upon one single head; you, who made one single person the axis of all your schemes and hopes; you, who lately saw that person cut down in the midst of his race, and carried away with the torrent of human vicissitudes; you, who see nothing around you now but indigence, misery, and famine; who cry in the bitterness of your grief, No more support, no more protector, no more father; you are guilty of this second kind of idolatry. You *trusted in man, you made flesh your arm.* Were God the object of your trust, you would recollect, amidst all your grief, that providence is not inclosed in your patron's tomb; you would remember, that an invisible eye incessantly watches over, and governs

this

this world; that God, *who feedeth the fowls of heaven, and clothes the lillies of the valley*, Luke xii. 24. 28. that a God so good and compassionate, can easily provide for the maintenance and encouragement of your family.

And thou, feeble mortal, lying on a sick-bed, already struggling with the *king of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. in the arms of death; thou, who tremblingly complainest, I am undone! Physicians give me over! Friends are needless! Remedies are useless! Every application is unsuccessful! A cold sweat covers my whole body, and announces my approaching death! Thou art guilty of this second kind of idolatry, thou hast *trusted in man*, thou hast *made flesh thine arm*. Were God the object of thy trust, thou wouldest believe that though death is about to separate thee from men, it is about to unite thee to God: thou wouldest preclude the slavish fear of death by thy fervent desires: thou wouldest exult at the approach of thy Redeemer, *Come Lord, come quickly! Amen.* Rev. xxii. 20. How easy would it be, my brethren, to enlarge this article.

Dearly beloved, flee from idolatry, 1 Cor. x. 14. is the exhortation of an apostle, and with this exhortation we conclude this discourse, and inforce the design of the prophet in the text. *Flee from idolatry*, not only from gross idolatry, but from that, which, though it may appear less shocking, is no less repugnant to the spirit of religion. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob; Why speakest thou, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord; My judgment is passed over from my God?* The guardianship of you is that part of the dominion of God of which he is most jealous. His love for you is so exquisite, that he condescends to charge himself with your happiness. The happiness, which you feel in communion with him, is intended to engage you to him: and the noblest homage that you can return, the purest incense that you can offer, is to say to him, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. It is good for me to draw near to God*, Psal. lxxiii. 25, 28.

If you place your hopes upon creatures, you depend upon winds, and waves, and precarious seasons; upon the treachery, iniquity, and inconstancy of men: or to say all in one word, you depend upon death. That poor man is a self-deceiver, who like the man in the gospel, saith *within himself, My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*, Luke

xii. 17, 19. But I expect to find him, yes, I expect to find him at the sound of that voice, which may this very night require his soul, I expect to find him in a sick bed. There, all pale, distorted, and dying, let him assemble his gods; let him call for his treasures, and send for his domestics, and acquaintances; in that fatal bed let him embrace his Drusillas, and Dalilahs; let him form harmonious concerts, amuse himself with fashionable diversions, or feast his eyes with gaudy decorations, the vacuity and vanity of which, in spite of himself, he will be obliged to discover.

O! give me more solid foundations for my hopes! May I never build my house upon the sand, endangered by every wind and wave; may the edifice of my felicity be superior to human vicissitudes, and *like mount Sion, which cannot be removed*, Psal. cxxv. 1. may I build upon the Rock of Ages, and be able, in public calamities and in my private misfortunes, above all, in the agonies of death, to appropriate those *precious promises*, 2 Pet. i. 4. which God hath made to his church in general, and to every individual in it: *The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed*, Isa. liv. 10.

To this God, of whose grandeur we form such elevated notions, and upon whose promises we found such exalted hopes, be honour and glory for ever, and ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S WISDOM, AND THE ABUNDANCE OF HIS POWER.

JEREMIAH xxxii. 19.

Great in counsel and mighty in work.

THESE words are connected with the two preceding verses: *Ah, Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm,* and *there is nothing too hard for thee. Thou shewest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work.*

The text we have read to you, my brethren, and which, though very short, hath doubtless already excited many grand ideas in your minds, is a homage, which the prophet Jeremiah paid to the perfections of God, when they seemed to counteract one another. To make this plain to you, we will endeavour to fix your attention on the circumstances in which our prophet was, when he pronounced the words. This is the best method of explaining the text, and with this we begin.

Jeremiah was actually a martyr to his ministry, when he addressed that prayer to God, of which this text is only a part. He was reduced to the disagreeable necessity of not being able to avail himself of the rights of religion without invalidating the maxims of civil government. This is one of the most difficult straits, into which the ministers of the living God can be brought; for, however they may be opposed, people always regard them, if not with intire submission, yet with some degree of respect, while they confine

themselves to the duties of their own office, and, while content with the speaking of heavenly things, they leave the reins of government in the hands of those to whom Providence hath committed them. But when religion and civil policy are so united that ministers cannot discharge their functions without becoming, in a manner, ministers of state, without determining whether it be proper to make peace, or to declare war, to enter into alliances, or to dissolve them: how extremely delicate and difficult does their ministry become? This was our prophet's case. Jerusalem had been besieged for the space of one year by Nebuchadnezzar's army, and it was doubtful whether the city should capitulate with that prince, or hold out against him. God himself decided this question, by the ministry of the prophet, and commanded him in his name to address the Israelites: *Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans; but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon . . . . . though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper*, ver. 3, 4, 5.

A prediction so alarming was not uttered with impunity; and Jeremiah was thrown into prison for pronouncing it: but, before he could well reflect on this trial, he was exercised with another, that was more painful still. God commanded him to transact an affair, which seems at first sight more likely to sink his ministry into contempt than to conciliate people's esteem to it. He commanded him to avail himself of the right, which every Israelite enjoyed, when his nearest relation offered an estate to sale: a right founded upon an institute recorded in Leviticus, ch. xxv. God required the Israelites to consider him as their sovereign, and his sovereignty over them was absolute. They cannot be said to have possessed any thing as proper owners; they held every thing conditionally, and in trust; and they had no other right in their patrimonial estates than what they derived from the arbitrary will of God. In order to preserve in them a sense of this dependence, they were forbidden to sell the lands, which they inherited from their ancestors: *The land shall not be sold for ever*, saith the levitical law, *for the land is mine, and ye are strangers and sojourners with me*, ver. 23. This was not unknown to the heathens, for

for Diodorous says, that the *Jews could not sell their inheritances**.

But as it might happen, that a landholder might become indigent, and be reduced by this prohibition to the danger of dying with hunger, even while he had enough to supply all his wants, God had provided, that, in such a case, the lands might be sold under certain restrictions, which were proper to convince the seller of that sovereignty, from which he would never depart. The principal of those restrictions were two; one, that the estate should be rather mortgaged than sold, and, at the Jubilee, should return to its first master: and hence it is, that, to sell an estate *for ever*, in the style of the Jewish jurisprudence, is to mortgage it till the jubilee. The other restriction was, that the nearest relation of him, who was obliged to sell his land, should have the right of purchasing it before any others, either more distant relations or strangers.

In virtue of this law, Jeremiah had a right to purchase an estate, which Hanameel, the son of Shallum, had offered to sale. The land lay at Anathoth, a town in the tribe of Benjamin, where our prophet was born, and was actually occupied by the Chaldeans at that time. Jerusalem was besieged, and Jeremiah was fully persuaded, and had even foretold, that it would be taken; that the Jews would be carried away into captivity; and would not be re-established in their own country till their return from Babylon at the expiration of seventy years. What a time to purchase an estate! What a season to improve a right of redemption!

But this command of God to the prophet was full of meaning; God gave it with views similar to, but incomparably surer than, those which the Romans had, when they publicly offered to sell the land where Hannibal was encamped when he was besieging the city of Rome. What the

* The case of the daughters of Zelophedad, related in Numb. xxvii. 8. procured a general law of inheritance. If a man died without a son, his daughters were to inherit: if without children, his brethren were to inherit: if without brethren, his uncle was to inherit: if without uncle his nearest relation was his heir. Grotius says that this law, which preferred an uncle before a nephew, passed from the Jews to the Phenicians, and from the Phenicians into all Africa.

Saurin. Dissert. Tom. III. Disc. vii.

the prophet was commanded to do, was designed to be an image of what the Jews should have the liberty of doing after their re-establishment. You may ascertain that this was the design of the command given to Jeremiah, by attending to the words, which he addressed to God himself, in the twenty-fourth verse of this chapter: *Behold the mounts, the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans: and thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money.* To this the Lord answers, *Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there any thing too hard for me? Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast, it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences,* ver. 25, 27, 42, 43, 44.

Jeremiah entered into these views, obeyed the command, and believed the promise; but, to fortify himself against such doubts as the distance of its accomplishment might perhaps produce in his mind, he recollected the eminent perfections, and the magnificent works of him, from whom the promise came. *Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruth,* says the prophet, *I prayed unto the Lord, saying, Ah! Lord God, behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee . . . . . Thou art the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name, great in counsel and mighty in work.*

The considering of the circumstances that attended the text is a sufficient determination of its end and design. The prophet's meaning, which is quite clear, is, that the wisdom of God perfectly comprehended all that would be necessary re-establish the Jewish exiles in their own land; and that his power could effect it. The words are, however, capable of a nobler and more extensive meaning, and in this larger view we intend to consider them. God is *great in counsel,* either, as the words may be translated, *great in designing, and mighty in executing*; or, as the same phrase is rendered in Isaiah, *wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,* ch. xxviii. 29. We will endeavour to give you a just notion of this sublime subject in two different views.

I. We

I. We will consider the subject speculatively.
II. We will consider it in a practical light.

We intend, by considering the subject speculatively, to evince the truth of the subject, the demonstration of which is very important to us. By considering it practically, we intend to convince you, on the one hand, of the monstrous extravagance of those men, those little rays of intelligence, who, according to the wise man, pretend to set their *wisdom and counsel against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30. and, on the other, of the wisdom of those, who, while they regulate their conduct by his laws alone, commit their peace, their life, and their salvation to the care of his providence. This is what I propose to lay before you.

I. *O Lord, thou art great in counsel, and mighty in work.* Let us consider this proposition speculatively. I shall establish it on two kinds of proofs. The first shall be taken from the nature of God; the second from the history of the world, or rather from the history of the church.

1. My first proofs shall be taken from the nature of God; not that it belongs to a preacher to go very deeply into so profound a subject, nor to his auditors to follow all the reflections he could make: yet we wish, when we speak of the Supreme Being, that we might not be always obliged to speak superficially, under pretence that we always speak to plain people. We wish you had sometimes the laudable ambition, especially when you assist in this sacred place, of elevating your minds to those sublime objects, of the meditation of which, the occupations, to which your frailties and miseries, or, shall I rather say, your vitiated tastes enslave you, you are deprived in the ordinary course of your lives.

The nature of God proves that he is *great in counsel.* Consider the perfect knowledge that he hath of all possible beings, as well as of all the beings which do actually exist. We are not only incapable of thoroughly understanding the knowledge that he hath of possible beings; but we are even incapable of forming any idea of it. I am not sure that the reduction of all the objects of our knowledge to two ideas is founded in reason. I do not know whether we be not guilty of some degree of temerity in comprising all real existences in two classes: a class of bodies, and a class of spirits. I leave this question to philosophers; but I maintain,

tain, that it argues the highest presumption to affirm, even allowing that every being within our knowledge is either body or spirit, that every thing must be reducible to one of these classes, that not only all real existence, but even all possible existence, must necessarily be either body or spirit. I wonder how human capacities, contracted as they are within limits so narrow, dare be so bold as to prescribe bounds to their Creator, and restrain his intelligence within their own sphere. If it were allowable to advance any thing upon the most abstract subject that can be proposed, I would venture to say, it is highly probable, that the same depth of divine intelligence, which conceived the ideas of body and spirit, conceiveth other ideas without end: it is highly probable, that possibility, (if I may be allowed to say so) hath no other bounds than the infinite knowledge of the Supreme Being. What an unfathomable depth of meditation, my brethren! to glance at it is to confound one's self. What would our perplexity be if we should attempt to enter it? The knowledge of all possible beings, diversified without end by the same intelligence that imagines them: What designs, or, as our prophet expresseth himself, What *greatness of counsel* doth it afford the Supreme Being?

But let us not lose ourselves in the world of possible beings; let us confine our attention to real existences: I am willing even to reduce them to the two classes, which were just now mentioned. Let each of you imagine, my brethren, as far as his ability can reach, how *great* the *counsel* of an intelligence must be, who perfectly knows all that can result from the various arrangements of matter, and from the different modifications of mind.

What *greatness* of *counsels* must there be in an intelligence, who perfectly knows all that can result from the various arrangements of matter? What is matter? What is body? It is a being divisible into parts, which parts may be variously arranged without end, and from which as many different bodies may arise, as there can be diversities in the arrangement of their parts. Let us proceed from small things to great. Put a grain of wheat to a little earth, warm that earth with the rays of the sun, and the grain of wheat will become an ear laden with a great many grains like that which produced them. Give the parts of these grains an arrangement different from that which they had in the ear, separate the finer from the coarser parts, mix a few drops of water

water with the former, and you will procure a paste: produce a small alteration of the parts of this paste, and it will become bread: let the bread be bruised with the teeth, and it will become flesh, bone, blood, and so on. The same reasoning, that we have applied to a grain of wheat, may be applied to a piece of gold, or to a bit of clay, and we know what a multitude of arts in society have been produced by the knowledge, which mankind have obtained of the different arrangements of which matter is capable.

But mankind can perceive only one point of matter; a point placed between two infinites; an infinitely great, and an infinitely small. Two sorts of bodies exist beside those that are the objects of our senses, one sort is infinitely great, the other sort is infinitely small. Those enormous masses of matter, of which we have only a glimpse, are bodies infinitely great, such as the sun, the stars, and an endless number of worlds in the immensity of space, to us indeed imperceptible, but the existence of which, however, we are obliged to allow. Bodies infinitely small are those minute particles of matter, which are too fine and subtile to be subject to our experiments, and seem to us to have no solidity, only because our senses are too gross to discover them, but which lodge an infinite number of organized beings.

Having laid down these indisputable data, let us see what may be argued from them. If the knowledge men have obtained of one portion of matter, and of a few different arrangements of which it is capable, hath produced a great number of arts that make society flourish, and without the help of which life itself would be a burden; what would follow if they could discover all matter? What would follow their knowledge of those other bodies, which now absorb their capacities by their greatness, and escape their experiments by their littleness? What would follow if they could obtain adequate ideas of the various arrangements of which the parts of bodies infinitely great and those of bodies infinitely small are capable? What secrets! What arts! What an infinite source of supplies would that knowledge become!

Now this, my brethren, is the knowledge of the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being knows as perfectly all bodies infinitely great, and all bodies infinitely small, as he knows those bodies between both, which are the objects of human knowledge. The Supreme Being perfectly knows what must result from every different arrangement of the parts of bodies infinitely small; and he perfectly knows what must

result from every different arrangement of the parts of bodies infinitely great. What treasures of plans! What myriads of designs! or, to use the language of my text, What *greatness of counsel* must this knowledge supply!

But God knows spirits also as perfectly as he knows bodies. If he knows all that must result from the various arrangements of matter, he also knows all that must result from the different modifications of mind. Let us pursue the same method in this article that we have pursued in the former; let us proceed from small things to great ones. One of the greatest advantages, that a man can acquire over other men with whom he is connected, is a knowledge of their different capacities, the various passions that govern them, and the multiform projects that run in their minds. This kind of knowledge forms profound politicians, and elevates them above the rest of mankind. The same observation, that we have made of the superiority of one politician over another politician, we may apply to one citizen compared with another citizen. The interest, which we have in discovering the designs of our neighbours in a city, a house, or a family, is in the little what policy among princes and potentates is in the great world.

But, as I just now said of the material world, that we knew only one point, which was placed between two undiscoverable infinites, an infinitely great, and an infinitely small, so I say of the world of spirits: an infinite number of spirits exist, which, in regard to us, are some of them infinitely minute, and others infinitely grand. We are ignorant of the manner of their existence; we hardly know whether they do exist. We are incapable of determining whether they have any influence over our happiness, or, if they have, in what their influence consists: so that in this respect we are absolutely incapable of *counsel*.

But God, the Supreme Being, knows the intelligent world as perfectly as he knows the material world. Human spirits, of which we have but an imperfect knowledge, are thoroughly known to him. He knows the conceptions of our minds, the passions of our hearts, all our purposes, and all our powers. The conceptions of our minds are occasioned by the agitation of our brains; God knows when the brain will be agitated, and when it will be at rest, and before it is agitated he knows what determinations will be produced by its motion; Consequently he knows all the conceptions of our minds. Our passions are excited by the presence of certain

tain objects; God knows when those objects will be present, and consequently he knows whether we shall be moved with desire or aversion, hatred or love. When our passions are excited we form certain purposes to gratify them, and these purposes will either be effected or defeated according to that degree of natural or civil power which God hath given us. God, who gave us our degree of power, knows how far it can go; and consequently he knows not only what purposes we form, but what power we have to execute them.

But what is this object of the divine knowledge? What is this handful of mankind, in comparison of all the other spirits that compose the whole intelligent world, of which we are only an inconsiderable part? God knows them as he knows us; and he diversifies the counsels of his own wisdom according to the different thoughts, deliberations, and wishes of these different spirits. What a depth of knowledge, my brethren! What *greatness of counsel! Ah, Lord God, behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name*, thou art *great in counsel.*

We have proved this, by considering the divine perfections, that God is *great in counsel*, and we shall endeavour to prove by the same method that he is *mighty in work.*

These two, wisdom and power, are not always united; yet it is on their union that the happiness of intelligent beings depends. It would be often better to be quite destitute of both, than to possess one in a very great, and the other in a very small degree. Wisdom very often serves only to render him miserable, who is destitute of power: as power often becomes a source of misery to him, who is destitute of wisdom.

Have you never observed, my brethren, that people of the finest and most enlarged geniusses have often the least success of any people in the world? This may appear at first sight very unaccountable, but a little attention will explain the mystery. A narrow contracted mind usually concenters itself in one single object: it wholly employs itself in forming projects of happiness proportional to its own capacity, and, as its capacity is extremely shallow, it easily meets with the means of executing them. But this is not the case with a man of superior genius, whose fruitful fancy forms notions of happiness grand and sublime. He invents noble

plans, involuntarily gives himself up to his own chimeras, and derives a pleasure from these ingenious shadows, which, for a few moments, compensates for their want of substance: but, when his reverie is over, he finds real beings inferior to ideal ones, and thus his genius serves to make him miserable. A man is much to be pitied, in my opinion, when the penetration of his mind, and the fruitfulness of his invention, furnish him with ideas of a delightful society cemented by a faithful, solid and delicate friendship. Recal him to this world, above which his imagination had just now raised him; consider him among men who know nothing of friendship but its name, or, who have at best, only a superficial knowledge of it, and you will be convinced that the art of inventing is often the art of self-tormenting, or, as I said before, that *greatness of counsels* destitute of *abundance of power* is a source of infelicity.

It is just the same with *abundance of power* without *greatness of counsels.* What doth it avail to possess great riches, to reign over a great people, to command formidable fleets and armies, when this power is not accompanied with wisdom.

In God, the Supreme Being, there is a perfect harmony of wisdom and power: The efficiency of his will, and the extent of his knowledge are equal. But, I own, I am afraid, were I to pursue my meditation, and to attempt to establish this proposition by proofs taken from the divine nature, that I should lose, if not myself, at least one part of my hearers, by aiming to conduct them into a world, with which they are entirely unacquainted. However, I must say, it is with reluctance I make this sacrifice, for I suppress speculations, which would afford no small degree of pleasure to such as could pursue them. It is delightful to elevate our souls by meditating on the grandeurs of God; and although God *dwelleth in a light which no man can approach unto,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. although it is impossible for feeble mortals to have a free access to him; yet it is pleasing to endeavour to diminish the distance that separates them. I cannot but think, that, without presuming too much upon natural reason, any one, who habituates himself to consult it, may assure himself of finding sufficient evidence of this truth, that the efficiency of God's will is equal to the extensiveness of his ideas, and, by close and necessary consequence, that he is as *mighty in work* as he is *great in counsel.*

Carry

Carry your thoughts back into those periods in which the perfect Being existed alone. Sound reason must allow, he hath so existed. What could then have been the rule or model of beings which should in future exist? The ideas of God were those models. And what could cause those beings, that had only an ideal existence in the intelligence of God, actually to exist out of it? The efficiency of his will was the cause. The will of the same Being then, whose ideas have been the exemplars, or models, of the attributes of creatures, caused their existence. The Supreme Being therefore, who is *great in counsel*, is *mighty in work*.

This being granted, consider now the ocean of God's *power*, as you have already considered the *greatness of his counsel*. God not only knows what motion of your brain will excite such or such an idea in your mind, but he excites or prevents that idea as he pleaseth, because he produceth or preventeth that motion of your brain as he pleaseth. God not only knows what objects will excite certain passions within you, but he excites or diverts those passions as he pleaseth. God not only knows what projects, your passions will produce, when they have gained an ascendency over you, but he inclines you to form, or not to form, such projects, because, as it seems best to him, he excites those passions, or he curbs them.

What we affirm of men, we affirm also of all other intelligent beings: they are no less the objects of the knowledge of God than men are, and, like them, are equally subject to his efficient will: and hence it is that God knows how to make all fulfil his designs. It is by this that he makes every thing subservient to his glory; Herod and Pilate, our hatred and our love, our aversions and our desires; the ten thousand times ten thousand intelligences, some of which are superior to us, and others inferior, all they are and all they have, the praises of the blessed and the blasphemies of the damned, all by this mean are instrumental in the execution of his designs, because the determinations of his will are efficient, because to will and to do, to form a plan and to have the power of executing it, is the same thing with the Supreme Being, with him whose ideas were the only models of the attributes of all creatures, as his will was the only cause of their existence.

But perhaps I am falling into what I meant to avoid: perhaps I am bewildering my hearers and myself in speculative labyrinths too intricate for us all. Let us reason then no longer

longer on the nature of God; this object is too high for us; let us take another method, (and here I alledge the second proof of the truth of my text, that is, the history of the world, or as I said before, the history of the church:) Let us take, I say, another method of proving that God, who is *great in counsel*, is also *mighty in work*. What counsel can you imagine too great for God to execute, or which he hath not really executed? Let the most fruitful imagination exert its fertility to the utmost; let it make every possible effort to form plans worthy of an infinite intelligence, it can invent nothing so difficult that God hath not realized.

It should seem, according to our manner of reasoning, that *greatness of wisdom* and *sufficiency of power* never appear in greater harmony in an intelligent being, than when that intelligence produceth effects by means, in all appearance, more likely to produce contrary effects. This, we are sure, God hath effected, and doth effect every day. And that we may proportion this discourse, not to the extent of my subject, but to the length of these exercises, we will briefly remark, that God hath the power of making, 1. The deepest afflictions of his children produce their highest happiness. 2. The contrivances of tyrants to oppress the church procure its establishment. 3. The triumphs of Satan turn to the destruction of his empire.

1. God hath the power of making the deepest afflictions of his children produce their highest happiness.

The felicity of the children of God, and in general the felicity of all intelligent beings, is founded upon order. All happiness that is not founded upon order is a violent state, and must needs be of short duration. But the essence of order, among intelligent beings, is the assigning of that place in their affections to every relative being which is fit for it. Now there is a fitness in having a higher esteem for a being of great excellencies than for one of small. There is a fitness in my having a higher degree of affection for one of whom I have received more benefits, and from whom I still expect to receive more, than for one of whom I have received, and still hope to receive, fewer. But God is a Being of the highest excellence, to God therefore I owe the highest degree of esteem. God is the Being of whom I have received the most benefits, and of whom I expect to receive the most; consequently, to God I owe the highest degree of affectionate gratitude.

Yet how often do the children of God lose sight of this grand

grand principle! I do not speak only of a few absent moments, in which the power of thought and reflection is, in a manner, gone; nor do I mean only those violent passions which criminal objects excite: I speak of a poison much less sensible, and therefore perhaps much more dangerous. We will give you one example out of many.

Two pious persons enter into the honourable state of marriage on principles of virtue, and compose a family that reveres the Creator by considering him as the only source of all the blessings they enjoy. Their happiness consists in celebrating the beneficence and perfections of the adorable God, and all their possessions they devote to his glory. He blesseth their union by multiplying those who compose it, and their children imbibe knowledge and virtue from the womb. The parents taste the most delicious pleasure in the world, in cultivating the promising geniusses of their children, and in seeing the good grain, which they sow in a field favoured of heaven, produce *in one thirty, in another sixty, in another an hundred fold*, and they delight themselves with the hopes of giving one child to the state, and another to the church, this to an art, and that to a science, and thus of enriching society with the most valuable of all treasures, virtuous and capable citizens. All on a sudden this delicious union is impoisoned and dissolved; this amiable fondness is interrupted; those likely projects are disconcerted; an unexpected catastrophe sweeps away that fortune, by which alone their designs for their family could have been accomplished; the child of their greatest hopes is cut down in the beginning of his race; the head of the family expires at a time in which his life is most necessary to it. A disconsolate widow, an helpless family exposed to every danger, are the sad remains of a house just now the model of the highest human happiness, and in all appearance, of the purest piety. Is not this the depth of misery?

From this depth of misery, however, ariseth the highest felicity. The prosperity of which we have been speaking, was so much the more dangerous by how much the more innocent it appeared; for if the persons in question had founded it in vice, they would have quickly forsaken it, as wholly incompatible with their pious principles; but as they had founded it in piety, there is great reason to fear they had placed too much of their happiness in earthly prosperity, and that it had almost entirely engaged the attention of their minds, and set bounds to the desires of their hearts. But what

what is it to engage the mind too much in temporal prosperity? It is to lose sight of God our chief good in a world where at best we can obtain but an imperfect knowledge of him. What is it to confine the desires of our hearts to earthly happiness? It is to forget our best interest in a world, where, when we have carried that love, which God so abundantly merits, to the highest pitch, we can offer him but a very imperfect service. Every object that produceth such an effect occupies a place in the heart, which is due to none but God. And while any other fills the seat of God in the heart, we may indeed have a kind of happiness, but it must be a happiness contrary to order; it is violent, and it must be short. I am aware that the loss will be bitter in the same degree as the enjoyment had been sweet; but the bitterness will produce ineffable pleasures, infinitely preferable to all those that have been taken away. It will reclaim us again to God, the only object worthy of our love, the alone fountain of all our felicity. This may be inferred from many declarations of scripture, and from the lives of many exemplary saints, as well as from your own experience, if indeed, my dear hearers, when God hath torn away the objects of your tenderest affection, you have been so wise as to make this use of your losses, to re-establish order in your hearts, and to give that place to God in your souls which the object held of which you have been deprived.

2. God establisheth his church by the very means that tyrants use to destroy it. But the reflections which naturally belong to this article, you heard a few weeks ago, when we explained these words in the Revelation, *Here is the patience of the saints,** Rev. xiii. 10. We endeavoured then to prevent the gloomy fears that might be occasioned in your minds by those new edicts, which Rome, always intent upon making *the kings of the earth drunk with her fornication*, chap. xvii. 2. had extorted against your brethren. We exhorted you, in the greatest tribulations of the church, never to lose sight of that divine providence, which watches to preserve it.

We reminded you of some great truths that proceeded from the mouth of God himself: such as, that the *Assyrian* was only *the rod of his anger*, Isa. x. 5. that *Herod and Pilate* did only *what his hand and his counsel determined before*

* This is the seventh sermon of the twelfth volume, and is entitled, *Les Nouveaux Malheurs de l'Eglise.*

before to be done, Acts iv. 27, 28. These truths should be always in our minds, for there never was a time when we had more need to meditate on them. The distresses of our brethren seem to be past remedy. To incorporate our felicity with that of a church, a considerable part of which hath been so long bathed in tears, seems as irrational as the conduct of Jeremiah, who just before the desolation of Judea, purchased an estate in that country, with the money which he wanted to alleviate his captivity in Babylon. Yet, *O Lord God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, is there any thing too hard for thee? Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power, and by thy stretched out arm. Thou art the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name; great in counsel, and mighty in work.*

3. Finally, God turneth the victories of Satan to the ruin of his empire. Here fix your attention upon the work of redemption, for the perfections of God, which we celebrate to-day, are more illustriously displayed in it than in any other of the Creator's wonders. Is it, if I may be allowed to express myself so, the utmost effort of the concurrence of the *greatness of his counsels* with the *abundance of his power*? I resume this subject, not for the sake of filling up my plan, but because my text cannot be well explained without it. Those inspired writers, who lived under the old testament dispensation, always mixed something of the gospel redemption with the temporal deliverances which they foretold.

One of the strongest reasons, that they urged to convince the Jewish exiles that God would restore their country to them, was that their return was essential to the accomplishment of the promises relating to the Messiah. Jeremiah particularly uses this method in the verses connected with the text. Why doth he exalt the *greatness of* God's *counsel*, and the *abundance of his power*? It is only because, as he expresseth it, *God would gather the Jews out of all countries whither he had driven them in his fury*: so that *men should buy fields in the places about Jerusalem?* ver. 37. No, but it is because he *would make an everlasting covenant with them*, ver. 40. It is because *at that time he would cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David*, ch. xxxiii. 15. Who is this *branch*? It is he of whom our prophet had before spoken in the twenty-third chapter of his prophecy: *Behold the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous branch*, ver. 5. It is

he of whom Isaiah said, *The branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious*, ch. iv. 2. It is he whom God promised by Zechariah after the captivity, in order to convince the Jews that the promises concerning *the branch* had not been accomplished by their release: *Behold the man whose name is The Branch, he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord*, ch. vi. 12. It is he whom the Jews themselves have acknowledged for the Messiah. It is the *holy seed*, who was promised to man after the fall, and who hath been the object of the church's hope in all ages.

It is eminently in behalf of this branch that God hath displayed, as I said before, in all their grandeur, *the abundance of his power*, and *the greatness of his counsel*. I do not speak here of that counsel, which hath been from all eternity, in the intelligence of God, touching the redemption of mankind. My capacity is absorbed, I own, in contemplating so grand an object, and to admire and to exclaim seem more suitable to our finite minds than to attempt to fathom such a prodigious depth: for where is the genius that can form adequate ideas of a subject so profound? A God, who from all eternity formed the plan of this universe: a God, who from all eternity foresaw whatever would result from its arrangement: a God, who, from all eternity, resolved to create mankind, although he knew from all eternity that they would fall into sin, and plunge themselves into everlasting miseries: but a God, who, foreseeing from all eternity the malady, from all eternity provided the remedy: a God, who from everlasting determined to clothe his Son in mortal flesh, and to send him into the world: a God, who, according to the language of scripture, *slew*, in his design from all eternity, *the Lamb* . . . . . Rev. xiii. 8. But, I repeat it again, my brethren, it better becomes such feeble minds as ours to admire and exclaim, than to attempt to fathom. Let us content ourselves with beholding, in the execution of this divine plan, how the victories of Satan have subverted his empire.

What a victory for Satan, when that Redeemer, that king Messiah, whose advent had been announced with so much pomp and magnificence, appeared in a form so mean, and so inferior to the expectations which the prophecies had occasioned, and to the extraordinary work for which he came into the world, when he lodged in a stable, and lay in a manger!

What

What a triumph for Satan, when Jesus had no attendants but a few miserable fishermen, and a few publicans as contemptible as their master!

What a victory for Satan, when Jesus was apprehended as a malefactor, dragged from one tribunal to another, and in fine, condemned by his judges to die!

What a victory had Satan obtained, when the object of Israel's hopes was nailed to an accursed tree, and there ended a life, upon which seemed to depend the salvation of mankind!

What a triumphant victory for Satan, when he had inspired the nation of the risen Redeemer to treat the report of his resurrection as an imposture, and to declare an everlasting war against him in the persons of all who durst declare in his favour!

But however, the more impracticable the redemption of mankind seemed, the more did God display *the greatness of his counsel* and *the abundance of his power* in effecting it; for he turned all the triumphs of Satan to the destruction of his dominion.

The Branch was lodged in a stable, the King of the universe did lie in a manger; but a star in the heavens announced his birth, angels conducted worshippers to him from the most distant eastern countries, and joined their own adorations to those of the wise men, who offered to him their gold, their frankincense and their myrrh.

His attendants were only a few fishermen and publicans; but this served the more effectually to secure his doctrine from the most odious objections that could be opposed against it. The meaner the vessel appears, the more excellent seems the treasure contained in it: the weaker the instruments employed in building the church appear, the more evident will the ability of the builder be. These fishermen confounded philosophers; these publicans struck the Rabbies dumb; the winds and the waves were subject to their authority; and to their commands all the powers of nature were seen to bow.

He was apprehended like a malefactor, and crucified; but upon the cross he bruised the serpent's *head* while Satan vaunted of bruising his *heel*, Gen. iii. 15. Upon the cross *he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*, Col. ii. 15.

He was wrapped in burying clothes, laid on a bier, and, with all the mournful furniture of death, deposited in a

tomb: but by this he conquered death, and disarmed him of his *sting*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. By this he furnished thee, christian, with armour of proof against the attacks of the tyrant, who would enslave thee, and whose formidable approaches have caused thee so many fears.

He was rejected by his own countrymen, even after he had risen victorious from the tomb, laden with the spoils of *the king of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. but their rejection of him animated his apostles to shake off the dust from their feet, against those execrable men, who, after they had murdered the master, endeavoured to destroy the disciples, and put them upon lifting up the standard of the cross in every other part of the universe, and thus the heathen world was bound to his triumphal chariot, and the whole earth saw the accomplishment of those prophecies, which had foretold that he should *reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.* How *great the counsel!* my dear brethren, how *mighty the work! Ah, Lord God, there is nothing too hard for thee.* Thou art *the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is thy name, great in counsel, and mighty in work.*

Here we may pause, and very properly come to a conclusion of this discourse; for, though we proposed at first to consider *the greatness of God's counsel, and the omnipotence of his working*, in a practical light, after having examined them speculatively, yet, methinks, the examination of the subject in one point of light, is the explication of it in both. When we have proved that God is *great in counsel, and mighty in work*, in my opinion, we have sufficiently shown, on the one hand, the extravagance of those madmen, who, in the language of the wise man, pretend to exercise, *wisdom* and *understanding* and *counsel against the Lord*, Prov. xxi. 30. and, on the other, the wisdom of those, who, taking his laws for the only rules of their conversation, commit their peace, their lives, and their salvations, to the disposal of his providence. Only let us take care, my dear brethren, (and with this single exhortation we conclude) let us take care, we do not flatter ourselves into an opinion that we possess this wisdom while we are destitute of it: and let us take care, while we exclaim against the extravagance of those madmen, of whom I just now spoke, that we do not imitate their dangerous examples.

But what! Is it possible to find, among beings who have the least spark of reason, an individual mad enough to suppose

pose himself wiser than that God, who is *great in counsel*, or, is there one who dare resist a God *mighty in working*? My brethren, one of the most difficult questions, that we meet with in the study of human nature, is, whether some actions in men's lives proceed from intentions in their minds. To affirm, or to deny, is equally difficult. On the one hand, we can hardly believe that an intelligent creature can revolve intentions in his mind directly opposite to intelligence, and the extravagance of which the least ray of intelligence seems sufficient to discover. On the other, we can hardly think it possible, that this creature should follow a course of life altogether founded on such an intention, if indeed he have it not in his mind. The truth is, a question of this kind may be either affirmed, or denied according to the different lights in which it is considered. Put these questions to the most irregular of mankind: Dost thou pretend to oppose God? Hast thou the presumption to attempt to prevail over him by the superiority of knowledge and power? Put these questions simply, apart from the conduct, and you will hardly meet with one, who will not answer No. But examine the conduct, not only of the most irregular men, but even of those, who imagine their behaviour is the most prudent? penetrate those secret thoughts, which they involve in darkness in order to conceal the horror of them from themselves; and you will soon discover that they, who answered so pertinently to your questions when you proposed them simply, will actually take the opposite side when you propose the same questions relatively. But who then, you will ask me, who are those men, who presumptuously think of overcoming God by their superior knowledge and power?

Who? It is that soldier, who, with a brutal courage, defies danger, dares death, resolutely marches amidst fires and flames, even though he hath taken no care to have an interest in the Lord of hosts, or to commit his soul to his trust.

Who? It is that statesman, who, despising the suggestions of evangelical prudence, pursues stratagems altogether worldly; who makes no scruple of committing what are called *state-crimes*; who, with a disdainful air, affects to pity us, when we affirm, that the most advantageous service a wise legislator can perform for society is to render the Deity propitious to it; that the happiest nations are those *whose God is the Lord*, Psal. xxxiii. 12.

Who?

Who? It is that philosopher, who makes a parade of I know not what stoical firmness; who conceits himself superior to all the vicissitudes of life; who boasts of his tranquil expectation of death, yea, who affects to desire its approach, for the sake of enjoying the pleasure of insulting his casuist, who hath ventured to foretel that he will be terrified at it.

Who? It is that voluptuary, who opposeth to all our exhortations and threatenings, to the most affecting denunciations of calamities from God in this life, and to the most awful descriptions of judgment to come in the next, to all our representations of hell, of an eternity spent in the most execrable company, and in the most excruciating pain; who opposeth to all these the buzz of amusements, the hurry of company, gaming at home or diversions abroad.

Study all these characters, my brethren, lay aside the specious appearances that men use to conceal their turpitude from themselves, and you will find that, to dare the Deity, to pretend by superior knowledge and strength to resist the wisdom and omnipotence of God, is not so rare a disposition as you may at first have supposed.

Let us abhor this disposition of mind, my brethren; let us entertain right notions of sin; let us consider him who commits it as a madman, who hath taken it into his head that he hath more knowledge than God the fountain of intelligence, more strength than he beneath whose power all the creatures of the universe are compelled to bow. When we are tempted to sin, let us remember what sin is: Let each of us ask himself, What can I, a miserable man, mean? Do I mean to *provoke the Lord to jealousy?* 1 Cor. x. 22. Do I pretend to be *stronger than he?* Can I *resist his will?* Rom. ix. 19. Shall I *set briars and thorns against him in battle? He will go through them, he will burn them together*, Isa. xxvii. 5. Let us seek those benefits in a communion with the great God, of which our fanciful passions can only offer the shadows. Let us not pretend to deceive him by the subtilty of our stratagems; but let us endeavour to please him by acknowledging our doubts, our darkness, and our ignorance; the fluctuations of our minds about the government of the state, the management of our families, and, above all, the salvation of our souls. Let us not appear in his presence boasting of our natural power: but let us present ourselves before him weak, trembling,

trembling, and undone. By the greatness of his compassion let us plead with him to pity our meanness and misery. Let our supplies be drawn from the fountains of his wisdom and power; this is real wisdom; may God inspire us with it! This is substantial happiness; may God impart it to us! Amen. To him be glory and honour for ever.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

LEVITICUS xix. 1, 2.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am *holy.*

I Address to all the faithful, whom the devotion of this day hath assembled in this sacred place, the command, which Moses, by the authority of God, addressed to all the congregation of Israel. However venerable this assembly may be, to which I am this day called by Providence to preach, it cannot be more august than that to which the Jewish legislator formerly spoke. That was composed of more than eighteen hundred thousand persons. There were magistrates, appointed to exercise justice, and to represent God upon earth. There were priests and levites, consecrated to the worship of God, and chosen by him to signify his will to the church. There were various ranks and degrees of men proportional to so great a multitude of people. God had given particular laws before, which were adapted to their different ranks, and to their various circumstances. But this is a general law: a law which equally belongs to magistrates, priests and levites: a law which must be observed at all times, and in all places. This is the law of holiness; *Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.*

I repeat it again, my brethren, I address to *all* the faithful, whom the devotion of this day hath assembled in this

sacred place, the same precept that God commanded Moses to address to all the congregation of Israel. The law of holiness, which I preach to day, commands you our supreme governors. Arbiters of your own laws, you see no mortal upon earth to whom you are accountable for your conduct, but there is a God in heaven, whose creatures and subjects you are, and who commands you to be holy. The law of holiness commands you, priests and levites of the new testament. The sacred character, with which you are invested, far from dispensing with your obligation to holiness, inforceth it on you in a more particular manner. This law commands you all, my dear hearers, of what order, of what profession, of what rank soever you be. If you be *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people*, you ought also to be *a holy nation, that ye may shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Whatever prerogatives Moses had above us, we have the same law to prescribe to you, that he had to Israel, and the voice of heaven saith to us now, as it said once to him, *Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.*

This discourse will have three parts. The term *holiness* is equivocal, and, consequently, the command, *ye shall be holy*, is so. We will endeavour to fix the sense of the term, and to give you a clear and distinct idea of the word *holiness*. This will be our first point.

Holiness, which, in our text, is attributed to God, and prescribed to men, cannot belong to such different beings in the same sense, and in all respects. We will therefore examine in what sense it belongs to God, and in what sense it belongs to men; and we will endeavour to explain in what respects *God is holy*, and in what respects men ought to be *holy*: this will be our second part.

Although the holiness, that is attributed to God, differs in many respects from that which is prescribed to men, yet the first is the ground of the last. The connection of these must be developed, and the motive enforced, *ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy*: this shall be our third part. This is the substance of all we intend to propose.

I. The term *holiness* is equivocal, and, consequently, the command, *ye shall be holy*, is so. Let us endeavour to affix a determinate sense to the term, and to give you a clear

clear and distinct idea of the meaning of the word *holiness*. The original term is one of the most vague words in the Hebrew language. In general, it signifies, to prepare, to set apart, to devote. The nature of the subject to which it is applied, and not the force of the term, must direct us to determine its meaning in passages where it occurs. An appointment to offices the most noble, and the most worthy of intelligent beings, and an appointment to offices the most mean and infamous, are alike expressed by this word. The profession of the most august office of the high priesthood, and the abominable profession of a prostitute, are both called *holiness* in this vague sense.

The poorest languages are those in which words are the most equivocal, and this is the character of the Hebrew language. I cannot think, with some, that it is the most ancient language in the world; the contrary opinion, I think, is supported by very sufficient evidence. However, it must be granted, it hath one grand character of antiquity, that is, imperfection. It seems to have been invented in the first ages of the world, when mankind could express their ideas but imperfectly, and before they had time to render language determinate, by affixing arbitrary names to all the objects of their ideas.

This remark may appear at first useless, particularly in such a discourse as this. It is, however, of great consequence; and I make it here for the sake of young students in divinity; for as the writers of the holy scriptures frequently make use of terms, that excite several ideas, the reasons of their choosing such terms will be inquired: and on such reasons, as the fancies of students assign, some maxims, and even some doctrines will be grounded. I could mention more mysteries than one, that have been found in scripture, only because on some occasions it usesth equivocal terms. An interpreter of scripture should indeed assiduously urge the force of those emphatical expressions, which the holy Spirit sometimes useth to signify, if I may so speak, the ground and substance of the truth: but, at the same time, he should avoid searching after the marvellous in other expressions, that are employed only for the sake of accommodating the discourse to the genius of the Hebrew tongue.

The force of the term *holiness*, then, not being sufficient to determine its meaning, its meaning must be sought elsewhere. We must inquire the object, to which he devotes

himself, who, in our scriptures, is called *holy*. For, as all those words, *ye shall be holy, for I am holy*, are equal to these, *ye shall be set apart*, or *ye shall be devoted, for I am set apart, or devoted*, it is plain, they cannot be well explained unless the object of the appointment or designation be determined. This object is the matter of our present inquiry, and on the investigation of this depends our knowledge of what we call *holiness*. Now, this subject is of such a kind, that the weakest christian may form some idea of it, whilst the ablest philosophers, and the most profound divines, are incapable of treating it with precision, and of answering all the questions that a desire of complete explication may produce.

The weakest christians may form (especially if they be willing to avail themselves of such helps as are at hand) some just notions of what we call *holiness*. It seems to me, that in this auditory at least, there is not one person, who is incapable of pursuing the following meditation: to which I intreat your attention.

Suppose, in a world entirely remote from you, a society, to which you have no kind of relation, and to which you never can have any. Suppose God had dispensed with an obedience to his laws in favour of this society, had permitted the members of it to live as they thought proper, and had assured them that he would neither inflict any punishment upon them for what we call *vice*, nor bestow any rewards on an attachment to what we call *virtue*. Suppose two men, in this society, making an opposite use of this independence. The one saith to himself, Since I am the arbiter of my own conduct, and the Supreme Being, on whom I depend, hath engaged to require no account of my actions, I will consult no other rule of conduct than my own interest. Whenever it may be my interest to deny a trust reposed in me, I will do it without reluctance. Whenever my interest may require the destruction of my tenderest and most faithful friend, I myself will become his executioner, and will stab him. Thus reasons one of them.

The other, on the contrary saith, I am free indeed, I am responsible only to myself for my conduct, but however, I will prescribe to myself some rules of action, which I will inviolably pursue. I will never betray a trust reposed in me, but I will, with the utmost fidelity, discharge it, whatever interest I may have to do otherwise. I will carefully preserve the life of my friend, who discovers so much fidelity

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and love to me, whatever interest I may have in his destruction. We ask those of our hearers, who are the least acquainted with meditations of this kind, whether they can prevail with themselves not to make an essential difference between those two members of the supposed society? We ask, whether you can help feeling a horror at the first, and a veneration for the last of these men? Now, this conduct, or the principles of this conduct, for which we cannot help feeling veneration and respect, although the whole passeth in a world, and in a society, to which we have no relation, and to which we never can have any, these are the principles, I say, to which he is devoted, whom our scriptures call *holy*: these principles are what we call *virtue, rectitude, order*, or, as the text expresseth it, *holiness. Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.*

Let us proceed a little further in our meditation, and let us make a supposition of another kind. You have all some idea of God. You have at least this notion of him, that he is supremely independent, and that none can punish or reward him for the use he makes of his independence. Suppose, as well as you can without blasphemy, he should lavish his favours on the faithless depositary, whom we just now mentioned, and should withhold them from the other: that he should heap benefits upon him, who would stab his tenderest and most faithful friend, and expose the other to indigence and misery. Suppose, on the contrary, that God should liberally bestow his favours on the faithful depositary, and refuse them to the other. I ask those of my hearers, who are the least acquainted with a meditation of this kind, whether they can help making an essential difference between these two uses of independence? Can you help feeling more veneration and respect for the Supreme Being in the latter case than in the former? Now, my brethren, I repeat it again, the laws, according to which the Supreme Being acts, are the laws to which the person is appointed, or set apart, who, in the holy scriptures, is denominated *holy*. Conformity to these laws is what we call *virtue, rectitude, order*, or, as the text expresseth it, *holiness*. In this manner, it seems to me, the weakest christian (if he avail himself of such helps as are offered to him) may form an adequate idea of *holiness*.

However, it is no less certain that the ablest philosophers, and the most consummate divines, find it difficult to speak with precision on this subject, and to answer all the questions that

that have arisen about it. Perhaps its perspicuity may be one principal cause of this difficulty: for it is a rule, of which we inform those to whom we teach the art of reasoning justly, that when an idea is brought to a certain degree of evidence and simplicity, every thing added to elucidate serves only to obscure and perplex it. Hath not one part of our difficulties about the nature of right and wrong arisen from the breach of this rule?

From what we have heard, in my opinion, we may infer, that all mankind have a clear and distinct idea of holiness, even though they have no terms to express their ideas of it with justness and precision. It seems to me that every mechanic is able to decide the following questions, although they have occasioned so many disputes in schools. On what is the difference between a just and an unjust action founded; on interest only? or, on the will of the Supreme Being only, who hath prescribed such or such a law? For, since we cannot help execrating a man who violates certain laws, though the violation doth not at all effect our interest, it is plain, we cannot help acknowledging, when we reflect on our own ideas, that the difference between a just and an unjust action is not founded on interest only. And since we cannot help venerating the Supreme Being more when he follows certain laws than when he violates them, it is plain, we cannot help acknowledging that there is a justice independent on the supreme law which hath prescribed it.

Should any one require me to give him a clear notion of this *justice*, this *order*, or *holiness*, which is neither founded on the interest of him who obeys it, nor on the authority of the Supreme Being who commands it; this should be my answer.

By *justice* I understand that fitness, harmony, or proportion, which ought to be between the conduct of an intelligent being, and the circumstances in which he is placed, and the relations he bears to other beings. For example, there is a relation between a benefactor who bestows, and an indigent person who receives, a benefit; from this relation results a proportion, a harmony, or a fitness, between benefit and gratitude, which makes gratitude a virtue. On the contrary, between benefit and ingratitude there is a disproportion, a dissonance, or an incongruity, which makes ingratitude injustice. In like manner, between one man, who is under oppression, and another, who hath the power of terminating the oppression by punishing the oppressor, there is a certain relation

relation from which results a proportion, a harmony, or a fitness in relieving the oppressed, which makes the relief an act of generosity and justice.

All mankind have a general notion of this proportion, harmony, or fitness. If they are sometimes dubious about their duty, if they sometimes hesitate about what conduct justice requires of them on certain occasions, it is not because they doubt whether every action ought to have that which I call *proportion*, *harmony*, or *fitness*; but it is because, in some intricate cases, they do not clearly perceive the relation of a particular action to their general notion of justice. Every man hath an idea of equality and inequality of numbers. Every man knows at once to which of these two ideas some plain and simple numbers belong. Eevry body perceives at once a relation between the number three, and the idea of inequality: and every body perceives instantly a relation between the number two and the idea of equality. But should I propose a very complex number to the most expert arithmetician, and ask him to which of the two classes this number belongs, he would require some time to consider, before he could return his answer: not because he had not very clear ideas of equality and inequality, but because he could not at first sight perceive whether the number proposed were equal or unequal. The arithmetician whom I have supposed, must study to find out the relation; as soon as he discovers it he will readily answer, and tell me whether the number proposed be equal or unequal.

Apply this example to the subject in hand. All mankind, according to our reasoning, have a general notion of a fitness, that ought to be between the conduct of an intelligent being, and the circumstances in which he is placed, and the relations he bears to other beings. Always when a man perceives that a particular action hath such a fitness, or hath it not, he will declare, without hesitation, that the action is just or unjust. If he hesitate in some cases, it is because he doth not perceive the relation of the action in question to this fitness. It belongs to casuists to solve difficulties of this kind. I perceive at once a relation between him who receives a benefit, and him who confers it, and from this relation I conclude that there is a fitness between gratitude and the circumstances of the receiver: therefore I declare, without hesitating, that gratitude is a virtue, and that ingratitude is a vice. But should I be asked whether it were a virtue or a vice to kill a tyrant, I might hesitate; because I might not at first perceive

ceive what relation there is between the killing of a tyrant and the fitness that ought to subsist between the conduct of a subject and his relation to a tyrant.

Should any one still urge me to give him clearer ideas, of that which I call the *proportion*, the *harmony*, or the *fitness* of an action, I would freely own I could not answer his enquiry. But at the same time, I would declare that my inability did not arise from the obscurity of my subject, but from the all-sufficiency of its evidence. I would recur to the maxim just now mentioned, that when a subject is placed in a certain degree of evidence and simplicity, every thing added to elucidate, serves only to darken and perplex it.

Should my enquirer still reply, that he had no idea of that which I call the *proportion*, the *harmony*, or the *fitness* of an action, I should consider him as a beingof a species different from mine, and I should not think of conversing with him. There are some common ideas, some maxims, that are taken for granted, even by the most opposite parties, and when those maxims are disputed, and those ideas not admitted, there is an end of conversing and reasoning.

This is a general notion of holiness. But the holiness, that is attributed to God, and prescribed to men, in the text, cannot belong in the same sense, and in every respect, to such different beings. We are going to examine then, in the second place, in what sense it agrees to God, and in what sense it agrees to man.

II. What hath been said of holiness in general, will serve to explain in what sense God is holy, and in what sense men ought to be holy. The general principle of holiness is common to God and man. The general principle of holiness, as hath been already shewn, is a perfect proportion, harmony, or fitness between the conduct of an intelligent being and his relations to other beings. The holiness of God is that perfect harmony, proportion, or fitness, that subsists between his conduct (if I may be allowed to speak thus of God) and his relation to other beings. The holiness of man consists in the same. But as the circumstances and relation of God differ from those of men, the holiness of God and the holiness of men are of different kinds. And it is the difference of these relations that we must distinguish, if we would give a proper answer to the questions in hand: In what sense, and in what respects is holiness ascribed to God? In what sense, and in what respects is holiness prescribed to men?

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The first question, that is, What relations hath God with other beings, is a question so extensive, and so difficult, that all human intelligence united in one mind could not return a sufficient answer. We have been accustomed to consider our earth as the principal part of the universe, and ourselves as the most considerable beings in nature. Yet our earth is only an atom in the unbounded space in which it is placed: and we are only a very inconsiderable number in comparison of the infinite multitude and the endless variety of creatures which the great Supreme hath made. There is an infinite number of angels, seraphims, cherubims, thrones, dominions, powers, and other intelligences, of which we have no ideas, and for which we have no names. God hath relations to all these beings, and on the nature of those relations depends the nature of that order, justice, or holiness, which he inviolably maintains in respect to them. But let us not lose ourselves in these immense objects. Let us only fix our meditation on God's relation to men, and we shall form sufficient ideas of his holiness.

What relation doth God bear to us? God hath called us into existence; and there are between us the relations of Creator and creature. But what harmony do we think there ought to be between the conduct of God to us, and the relation he bears to us of a Creator to creatures? Harmony, or fitness, seems to require, that God, having brought creatures into existence, should provide for their support, and having given them certain faculties, should require an account of the use that is made of them. This is the first idea that we form of the holiness of God. It does not appear to us fit, or agreeable to order, that God, after having created intelligent beings, should abandon them to themselves, and not regard either their condition, or their conduct. On this principle we ground the doctrine of Providence, and reject the extravagant system of the Epicureans.

What relation doth God bear to us? God hath given us a revelation. He hath proposed some principles to us. Between God and us there are the relations of tutor and pupil. But what fitness do we think there ought to be between the conduct of God and the relation of a tutor to a pupil, that subsists between him and us? It is fit, methinks, that a revelation proceeding from God should be conformable to his own ideas; and on this principle we ground the doctrine of the truth, or as the schools call it, the *veracity* of God, and maintain with St. Paul, even independently on the authority

of St. Paul, that *it is impossible for God to lie*, Heb. vi. 18.

What relation doth God bear to us? God hath made a covenant with us: to certain conditions in that covenant he hath annexed certain promises. Between God and us there subsists the relations of two contracting parties. What fitness do we think there ought to be between the conduct of God and that relation of an ally which he bears to us? We think that there is a harmony, or a fitness, in his fulfilling the articles of the covenant, and on this principle we ground our expectation of the accomplishment of his promises, and believe that *all the promises of God are yea, and amen*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

What relation subsists between God and us? God hath given us certain laws. Between God and us there are the relations of a law-giver and subjects. What harmony, do we think, there ought to be between the conduct of God and the relation of a legislator to a subject? We think harmony requires that the laws prescribed to us should be proportional to our ability; that nothing should be required of us beyond our natural power, or the supernatural assistances which he affords: and on this principle we reject a cruel system of divinity, more likely to tarnish than to display the glory of the Supreme Being: on this principle we say with St. James, *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upraideth not*, chap. i. 5. on this principle we say with St. Paul, that *as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law*, Rom. ii. 12. Follow this train of reasoning, my brethren, reflect on the other relations, which God bears to mankind, examine, as far as you are capable of examining, the harmony that subsists between the conduct of God and those relations, and the further you proceed in meditations of this kind, the more just, and the more enlarged will be your ideas of the holiness of God.

But perhaps some may accuse me of taking that for granted which remains to be proved, and of grounding my whole system of the holiness of God on a disputed principle, the truth of which I have not yet demonstrated: that is, that there doth subsist such a perfect harmony or fitness between the conduct of God and his relations to men. Perhaps I may be asked for the proofs of this principle, the ground of my whole system, for if the principle be doubtful the whole system

stem is hypothetical, and if it be false the system falls of itself. I answer, my brethren, that we have as strong and demonstrative evidence of the holiness of God as it is possible for finite creatures to have of the attributes of an infinite Being. We may derive sound notions of the conduct of God from three different sources, each of which will prove that a perfect harmony subsists between the conduct of God and his relations to us, and all together will fully convince us that God possesseth in the most eminent degree such a holiness as we have described.

1. We shall be fully convinced that God possesseth this holiness if we regulate our ideas of his conduct by our notion of his nature. Let me beg leave to remark, to those who have been accustomed to argue, that I do not mean here an imaginary notion of God, like that which some divines and some philosophers have laid down as the ground of their arguments. They begin by supposing a perfect being: then they examine what agrees with a perfect being: and that they attribute to God. This is their argument: *Holiness is an attribute of a perfect being: God is a perfect being: therefore holiness is an attribute of God.* We do not at present use this method. I suppose myself suddenly placed in this world, surrounded with a variety of creatures. I do not suppose there is a holy Supreme Being: but I inquire whether there be one: and in this manner I obtain a full demonstration. My knowledge of creatures produceth the notion of a Creator. My notion of a Creator is complex, and includes in it the ideas of a grand, infinite, almighty being. But the notion of a being who is grand, infinite, and almighty, includes in it, I think, the idea of a holy being. At least, I cannot perceive in this being, any of the principles that tempt men to violate the laws of order. Men sometimes transgress the laws of order through ignorance: but the grand, the mighty, the infinite Being thoroughly understands the harmony that ought to subsist between the laws of order and the most difficult and most complicated action. Men sometimes violate the laws of order, because the solicitations of their senses prevail over the rational deliberations of their minds: but the great, the powerful, the infinite Being is not subject to a revolution of animal spirits, an irregular motion of blood, or an inundation of bodily humours. Men sometimes violate the laws of order because they are seduced by a present and sensible interest: but this principle of a violation of the laws of order can have no place in God. The

great, the mighty, the infinite Being can have no interest in deceiving such contemptible creatures as we are. If then we judge of the conduct of God by that idea, which we are obliged to form of his nature, we shall be convinced of his perfect holiness.

2. We may be convinced of the holiness of God by the testimony, that God himself hath given of his attributes. The testimony, that God hath given of himself, is the most credible testimony we can obtain. And how doth he represent himself in the holy scriptures? He describes himself every where as a holy Being, and as a pattern of holiness to us. He describes himself surrounded with happy spirits, who perpetually cry, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Hosts.*

3. God will appear supremely holy to you, if you judge by his works. Behold the works of nature, they proclaim the perfect holiness of God. Consult that work of nature, your own heart: that heart, all corrupt as it is, yet retains some faint traces of the holiness of God, who created it; so that in spite of its natural depravity, it still does homage to virtue: it resembles a palace, which, having been at first built with magnificence and art, hath been miserably plundered and destroyed, but which yet retains, amidst all its ruins, some vestiges of its ancient grandeur. Behold society, that work of providence publisheth the supreme holiness of God. God hath so formed society that it is happy or miserable in the same proportion as it practiseth, or neglecteth, virtue. Above all, behold the work of religion. What say the precepts, the precedents, the penalties of religion? More especially, what saith the grand mystery of religion, that mystery which is the scope, the substance, the end of all the other mysteries of religion, I mean the mystery of the cross? Doth it not declare that God is supremely holy?

We have seen then in what respects holiness belongs to God, and, by pursuing the same principles, we may discover in what respects it belongs to men. Consider the circumstances, in which men are placed, and what relation they bear to other beings: Consider what harmony there ought to be between the conduct of men and their relations; and you will form a just notion of the holiness that men are commanded to practise. There is the relation of a subject to his prince, and the subject's submission is the harmony of that relation: in this respect it is the holiness of a man to submit to his prince. There is the relation of a child to his parent, and there is a harmony between the conduct and the relation

relation of the child when he loves and obeys his parent: Love and obedience to the parent constitute the holiness of the child.

The principal relation of man is that which he bears to God. Man stands in the relation of a creature to God, who is his Creator; and the conduct of a creature is in harmony with his relation when the will of his Creator is the rule of his actions: The revealed will of God then must regulate the will of man. Order requires us to submit ourselves to him of whom we have received all we enjoy: All our enjoyments come from God; from him we derive *life, motion, and existence,* Acts xvii. 28. It is impossible then to resist his will without violating the laws of order. Our future prospects, as well as our present enjoyments, proceed from God; our own interest demands then, that we should submit to his will, in order to a participation of those future favours, which are the objects of our present hopes.

We have seen then in what respects holiness belongs to God, and in what respects it belongs to men. But although holiness does not belong, in the same sense, and in every respect, to beings so different as God and man, yet the holiness of God ought to be both a reason and a rule for the holiness of man. *Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* This is our third part, and with this we shall conclude the discourse.

III. The holiness of God, we say, is both a rule and a reason for the holiness of man. The words of the text include both these ideas, and will bear either sense. They may be rendered, *Be ye holy as I am holy:* and, according to this translation, the holiness of God is a rule or a model of ours. Or, they may be rendered, *Ye shall be holy, because I am holy;* and, according to this, the holiness of God is a reason or a motive of our holiness. It is not necessary now to inquire which of these two interpretations is the best. Let us unite both. Let us make the holiness of God the pattern of our holiness: and let us also make it the motive of ours.

1. Let us make the holiness of God the model of ours. *The holiness of God is complete in its parts.* He hath all virtues, or rather, he hath one virtue that includes all others: that is, the love of order. He is equally just in his laws and true in his word, his promises are faithful, and his thoughts are right. Let this holiness be our pattern, *be ye holy as God*

God is holy. Let us not confine ourselves to one single virtue. Let us incorporate them all into our system. Let us have an assortment of christian graces. Let us be, if I may express myself so, complete christians. Let us *add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity*, 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

2. The holiness of God is *infinite in its degrees.* Nothing can confine its activity. Let this be our model as far as a finite creature can imitate an infinite Being. Let us not rest in a narrow sphere of virtue, but let us carry every virtue to its most eminent degree of attainment. Let us every day make some new progress. Let us reckon all we have done nothing, while there remains any thing more to do. Let each of us say with St. Paul, *I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark*, Phil. iii. 13.

3. The holiness of God is *pure in its motives.* He fears nothing, he hopes for nothing; yet he is holy. He knows, he loves, he pursues holiness. This is the whole system of his morality. Let this be our pattern. We do not mean to exclude the grand motives of hope and fear, which religion hath sanctified, and which have such a mighty influence over beings capable of happiness or misery. But yet, let not our inclinations to virtue necessarily depend on a display of the horrors of hell, or the happiness of heaven. Disinterestedness of virtue is the character of true magnanimity, and christian heroism. Let us esteem it a pleasure to obey the laws of order. Let us account it a pleasure to be generous, beneficent, and communicative. Let us *lend*, agreeably to the maxim of Jesus Christ, *hoping for nothing again*, Luke vi. 35. and, in imitation of his example, let us *lay down our lives for the brethren*, 1 John iii. 16.

4. The holiness of God is *uniform in its action.* No appearance deceives him, no temptation shakes him, nothing dazzles or diverts him. Let this be our example. Let us not be every day changing our religion and morality. Let not our ideas depend on the motion of our animal spirits, the circulation of our blood, or the irregular course of the humours of our bodies. Let us not be *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, Eph. iv. 14. Let us not be christians

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at church only, on our solemn festivals alone, or at the approach of death. Let our conduct be uniform and firm, and let us say with the prophet, even in our greatest trials, *Yet God is good to Israel*, Psal. lxxiii. 1. However it be, I will endeavour to be as humble on the pinnacle of grandeur, as if Providence had placed me in the lowest and meanest post. I will be as moderate, when all the objects of my wishes are within my reach, as if I could not afford to procure them. I will be as ready to acquiesce in the supreme will of God, if he conduct me through various adversities, and through *the valley of the shadow of death*, as if he led me through prosperities, and filled me with delights. Thus the holiness of God must be the model of ours: *Be ye holy as I am holy.*

But the holiness of God must also be the reason or motive of ours; and we must be holy because God is holy: *Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*

We groan under the disorders of our nature, we lament the loss of that blessed but short state of innocence, in which the first man was created, and which we wish to recover: *we must be holy then, for the Lord our God is holy.* The beauty and blessedness of man in his primitive state consisted in his immediate creation by the hand of God, and in the bearing of his Creator's image, which was impressed, in a most lively manner upon his mind. Sin hath defaced that image, and our happiness consists in its restoration: that is, in our being *renewed after the image of him who created us*, Col. iii. 10.

We wish to enjoy the favour of God: we must *be holy then, because the Lord our God is holy.* They are *our iniquities* that *have separated between us and our God*, Isa. lix. 2. and it is holiness that must restore a communion, which our sins have interrupted.

We tremble to see all nature at war with us, and wish to be reconciled to all the exterior objects, that conspire to torment us: we must *be holy* then, *because the Lord our God is holy.* Sin is a hateful object to a *holy* God. Sin hath armed every creature against man. Sin hath thrown all nature into confusion. Sin, by disconcerting the mind, hath destroyed the body. It is sin that hath brought death into the world, and *death is the sting of sin.*

We wish to be reconciled to ourselves, and to possess that inward peace and tranquillity, without which no exterior objects can make us happy: we must *be holy* then, *because the*

the Lord our God is holy. We have remarked, in this discourse, that God, who is an independent Being, loves virtue for its own sake, independently on the rewards that accompany and follow it. Nevertheless, it is very certain, the felicity of God is inseparable from his holiness. God is *the happy God*, because he is *the holy God*. God, in the contemplation of his own excellencies, hath an inexhaustible source of felicity. Were it possible for God not to be supremely holy, it would be possible for God not to be supremely happy. Yes, God, all glorious and supreme as he is, would be miserable, if he were subject, like unholy spirits, to the turbulent commotions of envy or hatred, treachery or deceit. From such passions would arise odious vapours, which would gather into thick clouds, and, by obscuring his glory, impair his felicity. Even heaven would afford but imperfect pleasure, if those infernal furies could there kindle their unhallowed flames. The same reasoning holds good on earth; for, it implies a contradiction, to affirm that we can be happy, while the operations of our minds clash with one another: and it is equally absurd to suppose that the Almighty God can terminate the fatal war, the tragical field of which is the human heart, without re-establishing the dominion of holiness.

We desire to experience the most close and tender communion with God, next Lord's-day, in receiving the holy sacrament; let us *be holy* then, *because the Lord our God is holy*. This august ceremony may be considered in several points of view: and one of them deserves a peculiar attention. The table of the Lord's supper hath been compared, by some, to that which was formerly set, by the command of God, in the *holy place*: I mean, the table of *shew bread*, or *bread of the presence*, Exod. xxv. 30. God commanded Moses to set twelve loaves upon the table, to change them every sabbath, and to give those that were taken away to the priests, who were to eat them in *the holy place*, Lev. xxiv. 6, &c. What was the end of these ceremonial institutions? The tabernacle at first was considered as the tent, and the temple afterwards as the palace of the Deity, who dwelt among the Israelites. In the palace of God it was natural to expect a table for the use of him and his attendants. This was one of the most glorious privileges that the Israelites enjoyed, and one of the most august symbols of the presence of God among them. God and all the people of Israel, in the persons of their ministers, were accounted

accounted to eat the same bread. The heathens, stricken with the beauty of these ideas, incorporated them into their theology. They adopted the thought, and set, in their temples, tables consecrated to their gods. The prophet Isaiah reproacheth the Jews with forsaking the Lord, forgetting his holy mountain, and preparing *a table* for the host of heaven, ch. lxv. 2. And Ezekiel reckons among the virtues of a just man, that he had *not eaten upon the mountains*, ch. xviii. 6. It was upon tables of this kind that idolaters sometimes ate the remains of those victims, which they had sacrificed to their gods. This they called *eating with gods;* and Homer introduceth Alcinous, saying, *The gods visit us, when we sacrifice hecatombs, and sit down with us at the same table.*

This is one of the most beautiful notions under which we can consider the sacrament of the Lord's supper. There we eat with God. God sitteth down with us at the same table, and so causeth us to experience the meaning of this promise, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*, Rev. iii. 20. But what do such close connections with *a holy* God require of us? They require us to be holy. They cry to us, as the voice cried to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, *Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground*, Exod. iii. 5.

God is supremely holy: God supremely loveth order. Order requires you to leave vengeance to God, to pardon your bitterest, and most professed enemies; and, what is more difficult still, order requires you to pardon your most subtle and secret foes. Would you approach the table of a *holy* God gnawn with a spirit of animosity, hatred, or vengeance?

God is supremely holy: God supremely loveth order. Order requires you to dedicate a part of those blessings to charity, with which Providence hath intrusted you; to retrench the superfluities of your tables, in order to enable you to assist the starving and dying poor. Would you approach the table of a *holy* God with hearts-hardened with indifference to that poor man, whom God hath commanded you to love as yourselves?

God is supremely holy: God supremely loveth order. Order requires you to be affected with the tokens of divine

love. All are displayed at the Lord's table. There the bloody history of your Redeemer's sufferings is again exhibited to view. There the blood, that Christ the victim shed for your crimes, flows afresh. There God recounts all the mysteries of the cross. Would you approach that table cold and languishing? Would you approach that table without returning to Jesus Christ love for love, and tenderness for tenderness? Would you approach that table void of every sentiment, and emotion, which the venerable symbols of the love of God must needs produce in every honest heart? Ah! my brethren, were you to approach the table of Jesus Christ without these dispositions, you would come, not like St. John, or St. Peter, but, like Judas. This would not be to receive an earnest of salvation, but to *eat and drink* your own *damnation*, 1 Cor. xi. 29. This would not be to receive the body of Jesus Christ: this would be to surrender yourselves to Satan.

I can hardly allow myself to entertain such melancholy thoughts. Come to the table of Jesus Christ, and enter into a closer communion with a *holy* God. Come and devote yourselves entirely to the service of a *holy* God. Come and arrange the operations of your minds by the perfections of a *holy* God. Come and diminish the grief you feel, because, in spite of all your endeavours to be *holy as God is holy*, you are so inferior to his glorious example. But, at the same time, come and receive fresh assurances, that you are formed for a more perfect period of holiness. Come and receive the promises of God, who will assuse you, that you shall one day *see him as he is, and be like him*, 1 John iii. 2. May God grant us this blessing! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

THE COMPASSION OF GOD.

PSALM ciii. 13.

Like as a father pitieth his *children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

AMONG many frivolous excuses, which mankind have invented to exculpate their unprofitableness under a gospel-ministry, there is one that deserves respect. Why, say they, do you address men as if they were destitute of the sentiments of humanity? Why do you treat christians like slaves? Why do you perpetually urge, in your preaching, motives of wrath, vengeance, the *worm* that never dies, the *fire* that is never quenched? Isaiah lxvi. 24. Motives of this kind fill the heart with rebellion instead of conciliating it by love. Mankind have a fund of sensibility and tenderness. Let the tender motives, that our legislator hath diffused throughout our bibles, be pressed upon us; and then every sermon would produce some conversions, and your complaints of christians would cease with the causes that produce them.

I call this excuse frivolous: for how little must we know of human nature to suppose men so very sensible to the attractives of religion! Where is the minister of the gospel, who hath not displayed the charms of religion a thousand, and a thousand times, and displayed them in vain? Some souls must be terrified, some sinners must be *saved by fear, and pulled out of the fire*, Jude 23. There are some hearts that are sensible to only one object in religion, that is, hell; and, if any way remain to prevent their actual destruction hereafter, it is to overwhelm their souls with the present fear

of it: *knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.*

Yet, however frivolous this pretext may appear, there is a something in it that merits respect. I am pleased to see those men, who have not been ashamed to say that the Lord's yoke is intolerable, driven to abjure a system so odious: I love to hear them acknowledge, that religion is supported by motives fitted to ingenious minds; and that the God, from whom it proceeds, hath discovered so much benevolence and love in the gift, that it is impossible not to be affected with it if we be capable of feeling.

I cannot tell, my brethren, whether, among these christians, whom the holiness of this day hath assembled in this sacred place, there be many, who have availed themselves of the frivolous pretence, just now mentioned; and who have sometimes wickedly determined to despise eternal torments, under an extravagant pretence that the ministers of the gospel too often preach, and too dismally describe them. But, without requiring your answer to a question so mortifying, without endeavouring to make you contradict yourselves, we invite you to behold those attractives to-day, to which you boast of being so very sensible. Come and see the Supreme Legislator, to whom we would devote your services; behold him, not as an avenging God, not as a consuming God, not *shaking the earth*, and *overturning the mountains* in his anger, Job. ix. 4, 5. not *thundering in the heavens, shooting out lightnings*, or *giving his voice in hailstones and coals of fire*, Psal. xviii. 13, 14. but, putting on such tender emotions for you as you feel for your children. In this light the prophet places him in the text, and in this light we are going to place him in this discourse.

O you marble hearts! so often insensible to the terrors of our ministry, may God compel you to-day to feel the attracting promises of the gospel! O you marble hearts! against which the edge of the sword of the Almighty's avenging justice hath been so often blunted; the Lord grant you may be this day dissolved by the energy of his love! Amen.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him. Before we attempt to explain the text, we must premise one remark, which is generally granted, when it is proposed in a vague manner, and almost as generally denied in its consequences: that is, that the most complete notion, which we can form, of a divine attribute,

tribute, is to suppose it in perfect harmony with every other divine attribute.

The most lovely idea we can form of the Deity, and which, at the same time, is the most solid ground of our faith in his word, and of our confidence in the performance of his promises, is that which represents him as an uniform being, whose attributes harmonize, and who is always consistent with himself. There is no greater character of imperfection in any intelligent being, than the want of this harmony: when one of his attributes opposeth another of his attributes; when the same attribute opposeth itself; when his wisdom is not supported by his power; or when his power is not directed by his wisdom.

This character of imperfection, essential to all creatures, is the ground of those prohibitions, which we meet with in the holy scriptures, in regard to the objects of our trust. *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish,* Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,* Jer. xvii. 5. Why? Because it is not safe to confide in man, unless he have such a harmony of attributes, as we have just now described; and because no man hath such a harmony. His power may assist you, but, unless he have wisdom to direct his power, the very means, that he would use to make you happy, would make you miserable. Even his power would not harmonize with itself, in regard to you, if it were sufficient to supply your wants to-day, but not to-morrow. That man, that prince, that mortal, to whom thou givest the superb titles of Potentate, Monarch, Arbiter of peace, and Arbiter of war; that mortal, who is alive to-day, will die to-morrow, the breath that animates him will evaporate, he will *return to his earth,* and all his kind regards for thee will vanish with him.

But the perfections of God are in perfect harmony. This truth shall guide us through this discourse, and shall arrange its parts: and this is the likeliest way, that we can think of, to preserve the dignity of our subject, to avoid its numerous difficulties, to preclude such fatal inferences as our weak and wicked passions have been too well accustomed to draw from the subject, and to verify the prophet's proposition in its noblest meaning, *Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him.*

Would

Would you form a just notion of the *goodness* of God, (for the original term that our translators have rendered *pity*, is equivocal, and is used in this vague sense in the holy scriptures.) Would you form a just notion of the goodness of God? Then, conceive a perfection that is always in harmon with

I. The spirituality of his essence.
II. The inconceivableness of his nature.
III. The holiness of his designs.
IV. The independence of his principles.
V. The immutability of his will.
VI. The efficiency of his power. But above all
VII. With the veracity of his word.

I. The goodness of God must agree with the *spirituality of his essence.* Compassion, among men, is that mechanical emotion, which is produced in them by the sight of distressed objects. I allow that the wisdom of the Creator is very much displayed in uniting us together in such a manner. Ideas of fitness seldom make much impression on the bulk of mankind; it was necessary therefore to make sensibility supply the want of reflection, and, by a counterblow, with which the miseries of a neighbour strike our feelings, to produce a disposition in us to relieve him. Nature produceth but few monsters, who regale themselves on the sufferings of the wretched. Here, or there, hath been a Phalaris, who hath delighted his ears with the shrieks of a fellow-creature burning in a brazen bull: And some, whose minds were filled with ideas of a religion more barbarous and inhuman than that of the Bacchanalians, have been pleased with tormenting those victims, which they sacrificed not to God, the father of mankind, but to him who is their murderer: But none, except people of these kinds, have been able to eradicate those emotions of pity, with which a wise and compassionate God had formed them.

But this sensibility degenerates into folly, when it is not supported by ideas of order, and when mechanical emotions prevail over the rational dictates of the mind. It is a weakness, it is not a love worthy of an intelligent being, that inclines a tender mother to pull back the arm of him, who is about to perform a violent but salutary operation on the child she loves. It is a weakness, it is not a love worthy of an intelligent being, that inclines a magistrate to pardon a criminal,

criminal, whose preservation will be an injury to society, and the sparing of whose life will occasion a thousand tragical deaths.

This kind of weakness, that confounds a mechanical sensation with a rational and intelligent love, is the source of many of our misapprehensions about the manner in which God loves us, and in which, we imagine, he ought to love us. We cannot conceive the consistency of God's love in making us wise in the school of adversity, in exposing us to the vicissitudes and misfortunes of life, and in frequently abandoning his children to pains and regrets. It seems strange to us, that he should not be affected at hearing the groans of the damned, whose torments can only be assuaged by uttering blasphemies against him. Renounce these puerile ideas, and entertain more just notions of the Supreme Being. He hath no body; he hath no organs, that can be shaken by the violence done to the organs of a malefactor; he hath no fibres, that can be stretched to form an unison with the fibres of your bodies, and which must be agitated by their motions. Love, in God, is in an intelligence, who sees what is, and who loves what may justly be accounted, lovely; who judgeth by the nature of things, and not by sensations, of which he is gloriously incapable: his love is in perfect harmony with the *spirituality of his essence.*

II. Our ideas of the goodness of God must agree with our notions of *the inconceivableness of his nature.* I oppose this reflection to the difficulties that have always been urged against the goodness of God. There are two sorts of these objections; one tends to limit the goodness of God, the other to carry it beyond its just bounds.

If God be supremely good, say some, how is it conceivable that he should suffer sin to enter into the world, and with sin, all the evils that necessarily follow it? This is one difficulty which tends to carry the goodness of God beyond its just extent.

Is it conceivable, say others, that the great God, that God, who according to the prophet, *weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance:* that God, who *measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span,* Isa. xl. 12. that God, who *sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and* considereth *the inhabitants thereof as grasshoppers,* ver. 22. is it conceivable that he should have such a love for those mean insects as the gospel

pel represents; a love that inclined him to give his own Son, and to expose him to the most ignominious of all punishments to save them? This is an objection of the second class, which tends to limit the goodness of God.

One answer may serve to obviate both these kinds of objections. The love of God is in perfect harmony with the inconceivableness of his nature. All his perfections are inconceivable, we can only follow them to a certain point, beyond which it is impossible to discover their effects. *Canst thou by searching find out God?* Job. xi. 7.

Canst thou by searching find out his eternity? Explain an eternal duration: teach us to comprehend an extent of existence so great, that when we have added age to age, one million of years to another million of years, if I may venture to speak so, when we have heaped ages upon ages, millions of ages upon millions of ages, we have not added one day, one hour, one instant to the duration of God, with whom *a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.*

Canst thou by searching find out his knowledge? Explain to us the wisdom of an intelligence, who comprehended plans of all possible worlds; who compared them all together; who chose the best, not only in preference to the bad, but to the less good; who knew all that could result from the various modifications of matter, not only of the matter which composeth our earth, but of the immense matter that composeth all bodies, which are either in motion or at rest, in the immensity of space, which lie beyond the reach of our senses, or the stretch of our imaginations, and of which, therefore, we can form no ideas. Explain to us the wisdom of a God, who knew all that could result from the various modifications of spirits, not only of those human spirits, which have subsisted hitherto, or of those which will subsist hereafter, in this world, but of the thousands of the *ten thousand times ten thousands that stand before him,* Dan. vii. 10.

Canst thou by searching find out his power? Explain to us that self-efficient power, which commandeth a thing to be, and it is; which commandeth it not to be, and it ceaseth to exist.

The extent of God's mercy is no less impossible to find out than the extent of his other attributes. We are as incapable of determining concerning this, as concerning any of his other perfections, that it must needs extend hither, but not

not thither: that it ought to have prevented sin, but not to have given Jesus Christ to die for the salvation of sinners. Our notion of the goodness of God should agree with the inconceivableness of his nature, and, provided we have good proofs of what we believe, we ought not to stagger at the objections, which an insufficient, or rather an insolent reason hath the audacity to oppose to it.

III. Our notion of the goodness of God should agree with *the holiness of his designs.* I mean, that it would imply a contradiction to suppose that a Being, who is supremely holy, should have a close communion of love with unholy creatures, considered as unholy and unconverted. By this principle we exclude the dreadful consequences that weakness and wickedness have been used to infer from the doctrine under our consideration. We oppose this principle to the execrable reasoning of those libertines who say, (and alas! how many people, who adopt this way of reasoning, mix with the saints, and pretend to be saints themselves!) *Let us continue in sin that grace may abound,* Rom. vi. 1. With the same principle the prophet guards the text, *Like as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity,*—whom? Them who establish their crimes on the mercy of God?—God forbid! *So doth the Lord pity them that fear him.* This truth is so conformable to right reason, so often repeated in the holy scriptures, and so frequently enforced in this pulpit, that none but those who wilfully deceive themselves can mistake the matter: and for these reasons we dismiss this article.

IV. The love of God is in perfect harmony with the independence of his principles. Interest is the spring that moves, and very often the effect that destroys human friendships. It must be allowed, however, that though principles of interest may appear low and mean, yet they often deserve pity more than blame. It would be extremely difficult for a debtor, if he were oppressed by a merciless creditor, to love any person more than him, who should be both able and willing to free him from the oppressor's iron rod. It would be strange if a starving man were not to have a more vehement love for him who should relieve his necessities, than for any one else. While our necessities continue as pressing as they are in this valley of tears, principles of interest will occupy the most of our thoughts, and will direct the best of our friendships. Disinterested love seems to be incompatible with the state of indigent creatures.

But God forbid we should entertain similar notions of the Deity! God is supremely happy. His love to his creatures is supremely disinterested. Indeed what interest can he have in loving us? Were this world, which hath existed but a little while, to cease to exist; were all the beings upon earth, material and immaterial, to return to their non-entity; were God to remain alone, he would enjoy infinite happiness; in possessing himself he would possess perfect felicity. *Every beast of the forest is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills,* Psal. l. 10. sacrificial flesh affords no nourishment to him; clouds of fragrant incense communicate no odours to him; he is not entertained with the harmony of the music that is performed in his honour; for *our goodness extendeth not to him,* Psal. xvi. 2. The praises of seraphims can no more augment the splendor of his glory, than the blasphemies of the damned can diminish it.

V. The love of God to his creatures agrees with *the immutability of his will.* There is but little reality, and less permanency, in human love. The names of steadiness, constancy, and equanimity, an indelible image, an everlasting impression, a perpetual idea, an endless attachment, an eternal friendship, all these are only names, only empty, unmeaning sounds, when they are applied to those sentiments, which the most faithful friends entertain for each other.

I am not describing now those light and inconstant people only, who are as ready to break as to form connections: I am describing people of another, and a better, disposition of mind. We are ignorant of ourselves when we imagine ourselves capable of a permanent attachment, and when we think we shall always love, because we are assured we love at present, we are the first to deceive ourselves. This man, who only at certain times discovers sentiments of tenderness, is not a hypocrite. That woman was very sincere, when weeping over a dying husband, and in some sense, more agonizing than he, she just gathered strength enough to close the eyes of her departing all, and protested she should never enjoy another moment except that, in which the great disposer of all event should appoint her to follow her beloved partner to the grave: the woman expressed what she then felt, and what, she thought, she should always feel: but, however, time brought forward new objects, and other scenes have calmed the violence of her passions, and have placed her in that state of tranquillity and submission to the will of God, which all the maxims of religion had not the power of producing.

People

People are not always to be blamed for the slightsomeness of their friendships. Our levity constitutes, in some sort, our felicity, and our imperfections apologize for our inconstancy. Life would be one continued agony, if our friendships were always in the same degree of activity. *Rachel* would be infinitely miserable, if she were always thinking about *her children, and would not be comforted because they are not*, Matt. ii. 18. I only mean to observe, that a character of levity is essential to the friendships of finite human minds.

God alone is capable, (O thou adorable Being, who only canst have such noble sentiments, enable us to express them!) God only, my dear brethren, is capable of a love, real, solid, and permanent, free from diversion and without interruption. What delineations, what representations, what purposes, revolved in the infinite mind, before that appointed period, in which he had determined to express himself in exterior works, and to give existence to a multitude of creatures? Yet throughout all these countless ages, through all these unfathomable abysses of eternity (I know no literal terms to express eternity) yet through all eternity he thought of us, my dear brethren; then he formed the plan of our salvation; then he appointed the victim that procured it; then he laid up for us that felicity and glory which we hope for ever to enjoy! What care and application are required to inspect, to order and arrange the numberless beings of the whole earth? The whole earth, did I say?—the whole earth is only an inconsiderable point: but what care and application are required to inspect, to order and arrange the worlds we discover revolving over our heads, with other worlds, which we have a right to suppose, in the immensity of space? Yet this application doth not prevent his attention to thee, believer; thy health he guards, thy family he guides, thy fortune and thy salvation he governs, as if each were the only object of his care, and as if thou wert alone in the universe! What an immensity of happiness must fill the intelligence of God, who is himself the source of felicity; of a God, who is surrounded with angels, archangels, and happy spirits, serving him day and night, continually attending round his throne, and waiting to fly at a signal of his will; of a God, who directeth and disposeth all; of a God who existing with the word, and the holy Spirit, enjoys in that union inconceivable and ineffable delights; and yet the enjoyment of his own happiness doth not at all divert his attention from the happiness of his creatures! If a Saul persecute his church,

he is persecuted with it, Acts ix. 4. and when profane hands touch his children, they *touch the apple of his eye*; Zech. ii. 8. *In all our affliction he is afflicted*, Isa. lxiii. 9. *Lo! he is with us always, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20.

VI. The goodness of God must harmonize with *the efficiency of the will*. The great defect of human friendships is their inefficacy. The unavailing emotions that men feel for each other, their ineffectual wishes for each others happiness, we denominate friendship. But suppose an union of every heart in thy favour, suppose, though without a precedent, thyself the object of the love of all mankind, what benefit couldst thou derive from all this love in some circumstances of thy life? What relief from real evils? Ah! my friends, ye are eager to assist me in my dying agonies; Alas! my family, you are distressed to death to see me die; you love me, and I know the tears that bathe you flow from your hearts; yes, you love me, but I must die!

None but the infinite God, my dear brethren, none but the adorable God hath an efficient love. *If God be for us, who can be against us*, Rom. viii. 31. Let the elements be let loose against my person and my life; let mankind, who differ about every thing else, agree to torment me, let there be a general conspiracy of nature and society against my happiness, what doth all this signify to me? If God love me, I shall be happy: with God to love and to beatify, is one and the same act of his self-efficient will.

VII. But, finally, the goodness of God must agree with *his veracity*. I mean, that, although the many scripture-images of the goodness of God are imperfect, and must not be literally understood, they must, however, have a real sense and meaning. Moreover, I affirm, that the grandeur of the original is not at all diminished, but, on the contrary, that our ideas of it are very much enlarged, by purifying and retrenching the images that represent it; and this we are obliged to do on account of the eminence of the divine perfections. And here, my brethren, I own, I am involved in the most disagreeable difficulty that can be imagined, and my mind is absorbed in an innumerable multitude of objects, each of which verifieth the proposition in the text. I am obliged to pass by a world of proofs and demonstrations. Yes, I pass by the firmament with all its stars, the earth with all its productions, the treasures of the sea and the influences of the air, the symmetry of the body, the charms of society, and

and many other objects, which, in the most eloquent and pathetic manner, preach the Creator's goodness to us. These grand objects, which have excited the astonishment of philosophers, and filled the inspired writers with wonder and praise, scarcely merit a moment's attention to-day. I stop at the principal idea of the prophet. We have before observed, that the term, which is rendered *pity* in the text, is a vague word, and is often put in scripture for the *goodness* of God in general, however, we must acknowledge, that it most properly signifies the disposition of a good parent, who is inclined to shew mercy to his son, when he is become sensible of his follies, and endeavours by new effusions of love to re-establish the communion that his disobedience had interrupted: this is certainly the principal idea of the prophet.

Now who can doubt, my brethren, whether God possess the reality of this image in the most noble, the most rich, and the most eminent sense? Wouldst thou be convinced, sinner, of the truth of the declaration in the text? Wouldst thou know the extent of the mercy of God to poor sinful men? Consider then, 1. The victim he hath substituted in their stead. 2. The patience he exerciseth towards them. 3. The crimes he pardons. 4. The familiar friendship to which he invites them. And, 5. The rewards he bestows on them. Ah! you tender fathers, you mothers who seem to be all love for your children, you whose eyes, whose hearts, whose perpetual cares and affections are concentered in them, yield, yield to the love of God for his children, and acknowledge that God only knows how to love!

Let us remark, 1. The *sacrifice*, that God hath substituted in the sinner's stead. One of the liveliest and most emphatical expressions of the love of God, in my opinion, is that in the gospel of St. John. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, ch. iii. 16. Weigh these words, my brethren, *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.* Metaphysical ideas begin to grow into disrepute, and I am not surprized at it. Mankind have such imperfect notions of substances, they know so little of the nature of spirits, particularly, they are so entirely at a loss in reasoning on the Infinite Spirit, that we need not be astonished if people retire from a speculative track in which the indiscretion of some hath made great mistakes.

Behold a sure system of metaphysics. Convinced of the imperfection of all my knowledge, and particularly of my discoveries

discoveries of the being and perfections of God, I consult the sacred oracles, which God hath published, in order to obtain right notions of him. I immediately perceive, that God, in speaking of himself, hath proportioned his language to the weakness of men, to whom he hath addressed his word. In this view, I meet with no difficulty in explaining those passages in which God saith, he hath hands or feet, eyes or heart, he goeth or cometh, ascendeth or descendeth, he is in some cases pleased, and in others provoked.

Yet, methinks, it would be a strange abuse of this notion of scripture, not to understand some constant ideas literally; ideas which the scriptures give us of God, and on which the system of christianity partly rests.

I perceive, and I think very clearly, that the scriptures constantly speak of a being, a person, or, if I may speak so, a portion of the divine essence, which is called the Father, and another that is called the Son.

I think, I perceive with equal evidence in the same book, that between these two persons, the Father and the Son, there is the closest and most intimate union that can be imagined. What love must there be between these two persons, who have the same perfections and the same ideas, the same purposes and the same plans? What love must subsist between two persons, whose union is not interrupted by any calamity without, by any passion within, or, to speak more fully still, by any imagination?

With equal clearness I perceive, that the man Jesus, who was born at Bethlehem, and was laid in a manger, was in the closest union with the word, that is, with the Son of God; and that in virtue of this union the man Jesus is more beloved of God than all the other creatures of the universe.

No less clearly do I perceive in scripture, that the man Jesus, who is as closely united to the eternal word, as the word is to God, was delivered for me, a vile creature, to the most ignominious treatment, to sufferings the most painful, and the most shameful, that were inflicted on the meanest and basest of mankind.

And when I inquire the cause of this great mystery, when I ask, Why did the almighty God bestow so rich a present on me? Especially, when I apply to revelation for an explication of this mystery, which reason cannot fully explain, I can find no other cause than the *compassion* of God.

Let the schools take their way, let reason lose itself in speculations, yea, let faith find it difficult to submit to a doctrine,

doctrine, which hath always appeared with an awful solemnity to those who have thought and meditated on it; for my part, I abide by this clear and astonishing, but, at the same time, this kind and comfortable proposition, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* When people shew us Jesus Christ in the garden, sweating *great drops* of blood; when they speak of his trial before Caiaphas and Pilate, in which he was interrogated, insulted and scourged; when they present him to our view on mount Calvary, nailed to a cross, and bowing beneath the blows of heaven and earth; when they require the reason of these formidable and surprizing phœnomena, we will answer, It is because God loved mankind; it is because *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*

2. *The patience that God exerciseth towards sinners,* is our second remark. Here, my brethren, I wish, that as many of you as are interested in this article would allow me to omit particulars, and would recollect the histories of your own lives.

My life, says one, is consumed in perpetual indolence. I am a stranger to the practice of private devotion, and, to speak the truth, I consider it only as a fancy. I attend public worship, only because I would conform to example and custom. I hear the sermons of the ministers of the gospel as amusive discourses, that treat of subjects in which I have no interest. I take no part in the prayers that are addressed to God in behalf of the sick or the poor, the church or the state.

I, saith a second, ever since I have been in the world, have cherished one of the most shameful and criminal passions; sometimes I have been shocked at its turpitude, and sometimes I have resolved to free myself from it: in some of my sicknesses, which, I thought, would have ended in death, I determined on a sincere conversion: sometimes a sermon, or a pious book, hath brought me to self-examination, which hath ended in a promise of reformation: sometimes the sight of the Lord's supper, an institution properly adapted to display *the sinfulness of sin,* hath exhibited my sin in all its heinousness, and hath bound me by oath to sacrifice my unworthy passion to God. But my corruption hath been superior to all, and yet God hath borne with me to this day.

A third must say, As for me, I have lived thirty or forty years in a country where the public profession of religion is prohibited

prohibited, and I have passed all the time without a membership to any church, without ordinances, without public worship, and without the hope of a pastor to comfort me in my dying illness; I have seduced my family by my example; I have consented to the settlement of my children, and have suffered them to contract marriages without the blessing of heaven; my lukewarmness hath caused first their indifference, and last their apostacy, and will perhaps cause . . . . and yet God hath borne with me to this day.

Why hath he borne with me? It is not a connivance at sin, for he hates and detests it. It is not ignorance, for he penetrates the inmost recesses of my soul, nor hath a single act, no not a single act, of my rebellion, eluded the search of his all-piercing eye. It is not a want of power to punish a criminal, for he holds the thunders in his mighty hands; at his command hell opens, and the fallen angels wait only for his permission to seize their prey. Why then do I yet subsist? Why do I see the light of this day? Why are the doors of this church once more open to me? It is because he commiserates poor sinners. It is because he *pitieth* me *as a father pitieth his children.*

3. Let us remark *the crimes which God pardoneth.* There is no sin excepted, no not one, in the list of those which God hath promised to forgive to true penitents. He pardoneth not only the sins of those whom he hath not called into his visible church, who, not having been indulged with this kind of benefits, have not had it in their power to carry ingratitude to its heighth: but he pardoneth also crimes committed under such dispensations as seem to render sin least pardonable; he pardoneth sins committed under the dispensation of the law, as he forgiveth those which are committed under the dispensation of nature; and and those that are committed under the dispensation of the gospel, as those which are committed under the law. He forgiveth, not only such sins as have been committed through ignorance, infirmity, and inadvertency, but such also as have been committed deliberately, and obstinately. He not only forgiveth the sins of a day, a week, or a month, but he forgiveth also the sins of a great number of years, those which have been formed into an inveterate habit, and have grown old with the sinner. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,* Isa. i. 18.

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But what am I saying? It is not enough to say that God forgiveth sins, he unites himself to those who have committed them by the most tender and affectionate ties.

4. Our next article therefore regards *the familiar friendship* to which God invites us. What intimate, close, and affectionate relation canst thou imagine, which God is not willing to form with thee in religion? Art thou affected with the vigilance of a shepherd, who watcheth over, and sacrificeth all his care, and even his life for his flock? This relation God will have with thee: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me besides the still waters,* Psal. xxiii. 1, 2. Art thou affected with the confidence of a friend, who openeth his heart to his friend, and communicates to him his most secret thoughts, dividing with him all his pleasures and all his pains? God will have this relation with thee: *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,* Psal. xxv. 14. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. *I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,* John xv. 15. Art thou touched with the tenderness of a mother, whose highest earthly happiness is to suckle the son of her womb? God will have this relation with thee: *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee,* Isa. xlix. 15.

Hast thou some good reasons for disgust with human connections? Are thy views so liberal and delicate as to afford thee a conviction that there is no such thing as real friendship among men? And that what are called connections, friendships, affections, unions, tendernesses, are generally no other than interchanges of deceit disguised under agreeable names? Are thy feelings so refined that thou sighest after connections formed on a nobler plan? God will have such connections with thee. Yes, there is, in the plan of religion, an union formed between God and us, on the plan of that which subsists between the three persons in the godhead, the object of our worship: that is, as far as a similar union between God and us can subsist without contradiction. God grants this to the intercession of his Son, in virtue of that perfect obedience which he rendered to his Father on the cross. This Jesus Christ requested for us, on the eve

of that day, in which, by his ever-memorable sacrifice, he reconciled heaven and earth: *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they also may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us,* John xvii. 9. 20, 21. Do not inquire the possibility of this union, how we can be one with God and with Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ and God are one. Our hearts, as defective in the power of feeling as our minds in that of reasoning, have no faculties, at present, for the knowledge of such things as can be known only by feeling. But the time will come when both sense and intelligence will be expanded, and then we shall know, by a happy experience, what it is to be one with God and with Jesus Christ.

This leads us to our fifth and last article, That is, *the felicity* that God reserveth for his children in another world. A re-union of all the felicities of this present world would not be sufficient to express the love of God to us. Nature is too indigent: our faculties are too indigent: society is too indigent: religion itself is too indigent.

Nature is too indigent: it might indeed afford us a temperate air, an earth enamelled with flowers, trees laden with fruits, and climates rich with delights: but all its present beauties are inadequate to the love of God, and there must be another world, another œconomy, *new heavens and a new earth*, Isa. lxv. 17.

Our faculties are too indigent; they might indeed admit abundant pleasures, for we are capable of knowing, and God could gratify our desire of knowledge. We are capable of agreeable sensations, and God is able to give us objects proportional to our sensations; and so of the rest. But all these gratifications would be too little to express the love of God to us. Our faculties must be renewed, and, in some sense, new cast; for *this corruptible* body *must put on incorruption:* this *natural body* must become *a spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 53. 44. so that by means of more delicate organs we may enjoy more exquisite pleasures. Our souls must be united to glorified bodies, by laws different from those which now unite us to matter, in order to capacitate us for more extensive knowledge.

Society is too indigent, although society might become an ocean of pleasure to us. There are men whose friendships

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are full of charms; their conversations are edifying and their acquaintance delightful: and God is able to place us among such amiable characters in this world: but society hath nothing great enough to express the love of God to us. We must be introduced to the society of glorified saints, and to thousands of angels and happy spirits, who are capable of more magnanimity and delicacy than all that we can imagine here.

Religion itself is too indigent, although it might open to us a source of delight. What pleasure hath religion afforded us on those happy days of our lives, in which, having fled from the crowd, and suspended our love to the world, we meditated on the grand truths which God hath revealed to us in his word, when we ascended to God by fervent prayer; or renewed at the Lord's table our communion with him! How often have holy men been enraptured in these exercises! How often have they exclaimed during these foretastes, Our souls are *satisfied as with marrow and fatness!* Psal. lxiii. 5. *O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!* Psal. xxxi. 19. We are *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: we drink of the rivers of thy pleasures!* Psal. xxxvi. 8. Yet even religion can afford nothing here below that can sufficiently express the love of God to us. We must be admitted into that state, in which there is neither *temple* nor *sun*, because God supplieth the place of both, Rev. xxi. 22, 23. We are to behold God, not surrounded with such a handful of people as this, but with *thousand thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand*, who stand continually before him, Dan. vii. 10. We must see God, not in the displays of his grace in our churches, but in all the magnificence of his glory in heaven. We are to prostrate ourselves before him, not at the Lord's table, where he is made known to us in the symbols of bread and wine: (august symbols indeed: but too gross to exhibit the magnificence of God) but we are to behold him upon his throne of glory, worshipped by all the happy host of heaven. What cause produceth those noble effects? From what source do those *rivers of pleasure flow?* Psal. xxxiv. 8. It is love which *lays up* all this *goodness* for us: Psal. xxxi. 19. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love*, Hosea xi. 4.

Let us meditate on the love of God, who, being supremely happy himself, communicateth perfect happiness to us. Supreme happiness doth not make God forget us; shall the

miserable comforts of this life make us forget him? Our attachments to this life are so strong, the acquaintances we have contracted in this world so many, and the relations we bear so tender; we are in a word, so habituated to live, that we need not wonder if it cost us a good deal to be willing to die. But this attachment to life, which, when it proceeds only to a certain degree, is a sinless infirmity, becomes one of the most criminal dispositions when it exceeds its just limits. It is not right that the objects of divine love should lose sight of their chief good, in a world where, after their best endeavours, there will be too many obstacles between them and God. It is not right that rational creatures, who have heard of the pure, extensive, and munificent love of God to them, should be destitute of the most ardent desires of a closer union to him than any that can be attained in this life. One single moment's delay should give us pain, and if we wish to live, it should be only to prepare to die. We ought to desire life only to mortify sin, to practise and to perfect virtue, to avail ourselves of opportunities of knowing ourselves better, and of obtaining stronger assurances of our salvation. No, I can never persuade myself that a man, who is wise in the truths of which we have been discoursing, a man, in whom *the love of God* hath been *shed abroad by the holy Ghost given unto him*, Rom. v. 5. a man, who thinks himself an object of the love of the great Supreme, and who knows that the great Supreme will not render him perfectly happy in this life, but in the next, can afford much time for the amusements of this. I can never persuade myself that a man, who hath such elevated notions, and such magnificent prospects, can make a very serious affair of having a great name in this world, of lodging in a palace, or of descending from an illustrious ancestry. These little passions, if we consider them in themselves, may seem almost indifferent, and I grant, if you will, that they are not always attended with very bad consequences, that, in some cases, they injure nobody, and, in many, cause no trouble in society: but, if we consider the principle from which they proceed, they will appear very mortifying to us. We shall find that the zeal and fervour, the impatient breathings of some, *to depart and be with Christ*, Phil. i. 23. the aspiring of a soul after the chief good: the prayer, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*, Rev. xxii. 20. the eager wish, *When shall I come and appear*

appear before God? Psal. xlii. 2. We shall find that these dispositions, which some of us treat as enthusiasm, and which others of us refer to saints of the first order, to whose perfections we have not the presumption to aspire; we shall find, I say, that these dispositions are more essential to christianity than we have hitherto imagined.

May God make us truly sensible to that noble and tender love which God hath for us! May God kindle our love at the fire of his own! May God enable us to know religion by such pleasures as they experience, who make love to God the foundation of all virtue! These are our petitions to God for you: to these may each of us say Amen!

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF THE MERCY OF GOD.

ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

For my thoughts are *not your thoughts, neither* are *your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For* as *the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

LO, *these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him!* Job xxvi. 14. This is one of the most sententious sayings of Job, and it expresseth, in a very lively and emphatical manner, the works of God. Such language would produce but very little effect indeedin the mouth of a careless unthinking man: but Job, who uttered it, had a mind fi'led with the noblest ideas of the perfections of God. He had studied them in his prosperity, in order to enable him to render homage to God, from whom alone his prosperity came. His heart was conversant with them under his distressing adversities, and of them he had learnt to bow to the hand of him, who was no less the author of adversity than of prosperity, of darkness than of day. All this appears by the fine description, which the holy man gives immediately before: *God*, saith he, *stretched out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He hath compassed the waters with bounds. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.*

proud. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens. But are these the only productions of the Creator? Have these emanations wholly exhausted his power? No, replieth Job, *These are* only *parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!* My brethren, what this holy man said of the wonders of nature, we, with much more reason, say to you of the wonders of grace. Collect all that pagan philosophers have taught you of the goodness of the Supreme Being. To the opinions of philosophers join the declarations of the prophets. To the declarations of the prophets, and to the opinions of philosophers, add the discoveries of the evangelists and apostles. Compose one body of doctrine of all that various authors have written on this comfortable subject. To the whole join your own experience; your ideas to their ideas, your meditations to their meditations, and then believe that you are only floating on the surface of the goodness of God, that his love hath dimensions, a *breadth, and length, and depth, and height*, which the human mind can never attain, Ephes. iii. 18: and, upon the brink of this ocean, say, *Lo, these are* only *parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!*

This incomprehensibility of the goodness of God, (and what attention, what sensibility, what gratitude have we not a right to expect of you?) this inconceivableness of the goodness of God we intend to discuss to-day. The prophet, or rather God himself, saith to us by the prophet, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Three things are necessary to explain the text.

I. The meaning must be restrained.

II. The object must be determined.

III. The proofs must be produced. And this is the whole plan of my discourse.

I. The words of my text must be restrained. Strictly speaking, it cannot be said, that God's *thoughts are not our thoughts*, and that his *ways are not our ways*. on the contrary, it is certain, that, in many respects, God's *ways are our ways, and his thoughts our thoughts.* I mean, that there are many cases, in which we may assure ourselves God

God thinks so and so, and will observe such or such a conduct. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is one of those doctrines, which we ought to defend with the greatest zeal, because it hath a mighty influence in religion and morality: but it would become a subversion of both, were it to be carried beyond its just bounds. Libertines have made fewer proselytes by denying the existence of God than by abusing the doctrine of his inconceivableness. It makes but little impression on a rational man, to be told, that matter is eternal; that it arranged itself in its present order; that chance spread the firmament, formed the heavenly orbs, fixed the earth on its basis, and wrought all the wonders in the material world. It makes but little impression on a rational man, to be informed, that the intelligent world is to be attributed to the same cause to which libertines attribute the material world; that chance formed spirit as well as matter, gave it the power, not only of reflecting on its own essence, but also of going out of itself, of transporting itself into the past ages of eternity, of rising into the heavens by its meditation, of pervading the earth, and investigating its darkest recesses. All these extravagant propositions refute themselves, and hardly find one partisan in such an enlightened age as this, in which we have the happiness to live.

There are other means more likely to subvert the faith. To give grand ideas of the Supreme Being; to plunge, if I may be allowed to say so, the little mind of man into the ocean of the divine perfections; to contrast the supreme grandeur of the Creator with the insignificance of the creature; to persuade mankind that the great Supreme is too lofty to concern himself with us, that our conduct is entirely indifferent to him; that it signifies nothing to him whether we be just or unjust, humane or cruel, happy or miserable: To say in these senses, that *God's ways are not our ways*, that *his thoughts are not our thoughts*, these are the arms that infidelity hath sometimes employed with success, and against the attacks of which we would guard you. For these reasons, I said, that the meaning of the text must be restrained, or that it would totally subvert religion and morality.

We have seldom met with a proposition more extravagant than that of a certain bishop*, who, having spent his life in

* Peter Daniel Huet, bishop of Avranches, a countryman of our author's. He was a man of uncommon learning, and in

defending the gospel, endeavoured at his death to subvert it. This man, in a book intituled *The imperfection of the human mind*, and which is itself an example of the utmost degree of the extravagance of the human mind, maintains this proposition, and makes it the ground of all his scepticism: that before we affirm any thing of a subject we must perfectly understand it. From hence he concludes, that we can affirm nothing of any subject, because we do not perfectly understand any. And from hence it naturally follows, that of the Supreme Being we have the least pretence to affirm any thing, because we have a less perfect knowledge of him than of any other subject. What absurd reasoning! It is needless to refute it here, and it shall suffice at present to observe, in general, that ignorance of one part of a subject doth not hinder the knowing of other parts of it, nor ought it to hinder our affirmation of what we do know. I do not perfectly understand the nature of light; however I do know that it differs from darkness, and that it is the medium by which objects become visible to me. And the same may be affirmed of other objects.

In like manner, the exercise of my reasoning powers produceth in me some incontestible notions of God, and, from these notions, immediately follow some sure consequences, which become the immoveable bases of my faith in his word, of my submission to his will, and of my confidence in his promises. These notions, and these consequences, compose the body of natural religion. There is a self-existent Being. The existence of all creatures is derived from the self-existent Being, and he is the only source of all their perfections. That Being, who is the source of the perfections of all other beings, is more powerful than the most powerful monarchs, because the most powerful monarchs derive only a finite power from him. He is wiser than the most consummate politicians, because the most consummate politicians derive only a finite wisdom from him. His knowledge exceeds that of the most knowing philosophers, or of the most transcendent geniusses, because the most transcendent geniusses and

in justice to christianity, as well as to his lordship, it ought to be remembered, that he wrote his *demonstratio evangelica* in the vigour of his life: but his *traite philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humaine*, of which Mons. Saurin complains, was written more than forty years after, when he was ninety years of age, and was superannuated. Father Castell, the Jesuit, denies that it was written by Huet at all.

and the most knowing philosophers derive only a finite knowledge from him. And the same may be said of others. There are then some incontestible notions, which reason gives us of God.

From these notions follow some sure and necessary consequences. If all creatures derive their being and preservation from him, I owe to him all I am, and all I have, he is the sole object of my desires and hopes, and I am necessarily engaged to be grateful for his favours, and entirely submissive to his will. If creature-perfections be only emanations from him, the source of all perfections, I ought to have nobler sentiments of his perfections, than of those of creatures, elevated howsoever the latter may be. I ought to fear him more than I ought to fear the mightiest king, because the power of the mightiest king is only an emanation of his. I ought to commit myself to his direction, and to trust more to his wisdom than to that of the wisest politician, because the prudence of the wisest politician is only an emanation of his: and so of the rest. Let is be granted, that God is, in many respects, quite incomprehensible, that we can attain only a small degree of knowledge of this infinite object, or, to use the words of our text, that *his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways:* yet it will not follow, that the notions, which reason gives us of him, are less just, or, that the consequences, which immediately follow these notions, are less sure; or, that all the objections, which libertines and sceptics pretend to derive from the doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God, against natural religion, do not evaporate and disappear.

If reason affords us some adequate notions of God, if some necessary consequences follow these notions, for a much stronger reason, we may derive some adequate notions of God, and some sure consequences, from revelation. It is a very extravagant and sophistical way of reasoning, to alledge the darkness of revelation upon this subject, in order to obscure the light that it doth afford us. These words, *my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways*, do not mean, then, that we can know nothing of the divine essence; that we cannot certainly discover in what cases he will approve of our conduct, and in what cases he will condemn it: they only mean, that finite minds cannot form complete ideas of God, know the whole sphere of his attributes, or certainly foresee all the effects they can

produce. Thus we have endeavoured to restrain the words of the text.

II. We are to determine their object. The prophet's expression would have been true, had they been applied to all the attributes of God: however, they are applied here only to one of them, that is, to his goodness. The connection of the text with the preceding verses proves this. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the righteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, ver. 6, 7. The text immediately follows: *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.* It is clear, I think that the last words, *my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways*, directly relate to the preceding clause, *the Lord will have mercy upon him, and our God will abundantly pardon.* Wherein do the thoughts of God differ from ours? In this sense they differ: In God there are treasures of mercy, the depth of which no finite mind can fathom. In him goodness is as inconceivable as all his other attributes. In God, a sinner, who seems to have carried his sin to its utmost extravagance, and to have exhausted all the treasures of divine grace, shall still find, if he *return unto the Lord*, and cast himself at the foot of him, who *abundantly pardoneth*, a goodness, a compassion, a love, that he could not have imagined to find.

When we speak of the goodness of God, we mean, not only that perfection, which inclines him to communicate natural benefits to all creatures, and which hath occasioned the inspired writers to say, that *All* creatures *wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season*, Psal. civ. 27. that *he left not himself without witness in doing good*, Acts xiv. 17. But we mean, in a more especial manner, the grace of the gospel, of which the prophet speaks in the beginning of the chapter; *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price: Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people*, ver. 1, 3, 4.

3, 4. Who is this *leader*, whom God *gave* to be *a witness to the people*, that is, to manifest his attributes to the Gentiles? What is this *everlasting covenant?* What are these *sure mercies of David?* Two sorts of authors deserve to be heard on this article, though on different accounts, the first for their ignorance and prejudice, the last for their knowledge and impartiality. The first are the Jews, who in spite of their obstinate blindness, cannot help owning that these words promise the advent of the Messiah. Rabbi David Kimchi gives this exposition of the words: *the sure mercies of David*, that *is the Messiah, whom Ezekiel calls David, They shall dwell in the land that I have given them, they, and their children, and their children's children for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever*, Exek. xxxvii. 25. I purposely pass by many similar passages of other Jewish Rabbies. The other authors, whom we ought to hear for their impartial knowledge, are the inspired writers, and particularly St. Paul, whose comment on this passage, which he gave at Antioch in Pisidia, determine its meaning. There, the apostle, having attested the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, affirms that the prophets had foretold that event; and, among other passages, which he alledged in proof of what he had advanced, quotes this, *I will give you the sure mercies of David*, Acts xiii. 34. From all which it follows, that the object of our text is the goodness of God, and, in an especial manner, the love that he hath manifested unto us in the gospel; and this is what we undertook to prove.

Such views of the grandeurs of God are sublime and delightful. The divine perfections are the most sublime objects of meditation. It is glorious to surmount the little circle of objects that surrounds us, to revolve in a contemplation of God, in whose infinite perfections intelligent beings will for ever find matter sufficient to employ all their intelligence. Behold the inspired writers, they were fond of losing their capacities in this lovely prospect. Sometimes they stood on the borders of the eternity of God, and viewing that boundless ocean, exclaimed, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night*, Psal. xc. 2, 4. Sometimes they meditated on his power, and contemplating the number and variety of its works, exclaimed,

O Lord

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. When we consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Psal. viii. 1, 3, 4. Sometimes their attention was fixed on the immensity of God, and contemplating it, they exclaimed, *Whither shall we go from thy spirit? or whither shall we flee from thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven thou art there, if we make our bed in hell, behold thou art there: If we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead us, and thy right hand shall hold us,* Psal. cxxxix. 7, 10. But, however agreeable these objects of meditation may be, there is something mortifying and distressing in them. The more we discover the grandeur of the Supreme Being, the greater distance we perceive between ourselves and him. We perceive him indeed: but it is as an inhabitant of *light which no man can approach unto,* 1 Tim. vi. 16. and from all our efforts to know him we derive this reflection of the prophet, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high; I cannot attain unto it,* Psal. cxxxix. 6.

But the meditation of the goodness of God is as full of consolation as it is of sublimity. This ocean of the Deity is an ocean of love. These dimensions, that surpass your knowledge, are dimensions of love. These distances, a part only of which are visible to you, are depths of mercy, and those words which God hath addressed to you, *my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,* are equal to these: As far as heaven is above the earth; or more fully, as far as ye finite creatures are inferior to me the infinite God, so far are your ideas of my compassion and love to you inferior to my pity and esteem for you. Try; *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;* let not the multitude, or the enormity of his crimes terrify him into a despair of obtaining the pardon of them: *Let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Having

Having thus determined the object, and restrained the meaning of the text, we shall proceed to adduce the proofs.

III. The prophet addresseth himself to two sorts of people; first, to the heathens, who knew no more of the goodness of God than what they had discovered by the glimmering light of nature: next, to some Jews, or to some christians, who indeed, knew it by the light of revelation, but who had not so high a notion of it as to believe it sufficient to pardon all their sins. To both he saith on the part of God; *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts*, you Gentile philosophers. You know my goodness only by your speculations on the nature of the Supreme Being: but all that you discover, in this way, is nothing in comparison of what the Messiah will teach you in the gospel. *My thoughts are not your thoughts*, you timorous consciences, you gloomy and melancholy minds. Behold I yet open to you treasures of mercy, which you thought you had exhausted: *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

First, The prophet addresseth heathens, who had no other knowledge of God than a few speculations on the nature of the First Being; and who were never able to discover three mysteries of divine love.

1. The mean by which God conciliated his justice with his love.

2. His patience with those who abuse this mean.

3. His intimate union with those who fall in with the design of his patience.

1. The first mystery of love, which the wisest pagan philosophers could never discover, is the mean that God hath chosen to conciliate his justice with his love.

Let us carefully avoid the forming of low notions of God; let us not imagine that the attributes of God clash: No, God is perfectly consistent with himself, and his attributes mutually support each other. When we say, the love of God resisted his justice, we mean that, according to our way of thinking, there were some inconveniencies in determining the fate of mankind after the entrance of sin. In effect, what must become of this race of rebels? Shall God execute that sentence on them, which he hath pronounced against sin? But chains of darkness, a lake burning with fire and brimstone,

brimstone, weeping and wailing through an endless eternity, excite the compassion of a merciful God: Shall he then allow these unworthy creatures to live under his protection? Shall so many idle words, so many criminal thoughts, so many iniquitous actions, so much blasphemy, so many extortions, the shedding of so much innocent blood, shall all these go unpunished? But were these allowed, his love of order and his veracity would be blemished. These are difficulties which all the universe could not solve. This is the book of which St. John speaks in his revelation, the book *sealed with seven seals; I wept much*, saith St. John, *because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book; but worthy is the Lamb to take the book, and to open the seals*, chap. v. 4, 9.

From the depth of divine mercy proceeds a plan for the solution of all these difficulties. The Son of God clothes himself with mortal flesh. He saith, from his infancy, *In sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure!* Heb. x. 6. No, neither *burnt-offerings* nor *thousands of rams;* neither altars overflowing with blood, nor *ten thousands of rivers of oil;* neither the *first-born for the transgression*, nor all *the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul*, Micah vi. 6, 7. no, none of these is an offering worthy of being presented to thy justice: *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*, Heb. x. 7. Lo, I come to do that will, which requires the punishment of sin and the salvation of the sinner. Lo, I come to be led, *as a lamb to the slaughter*, and to be *dumb as a sheep before her shearers.* Lo, I am coming to suffer the very men, for whose salvation I come, to treat me as a malefactor; yea, moreover, I am coming to suffer the hidings of that adorable face, which hath always hitherto afforded me a *fulness of joy*, Psal. xvi. 11. I am coming to suffer a suspension of that love, which is all my delight, and to cry under excessive sorrows, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* Matt. xxvii. 46. We must necessarily sink under the weight of this subject, my brethren, and we must be content to see only *parts of the ways* of love. We must determine only to take a slight survey of *the breadth and length, and depth, and height of the love of God*, Eph. iii. 18. we must own that it *passeth knowledge*, and that these are things which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, 2 Cor. ii. 9. We must confess that if we were not able to give this general answer to the objections, that are made against the mysteries

of

of religion, that is, that the attributes of God are infinite, and that it doth not belong to such finite minds as ours to limit the infinite God, we should be overwhelmed with the difficulties, to which the marvels of redemption are exposed. Let us rejoice in the prospect of that happy period in which our faculties will be expanded, and in which we shall make a more rapid progress in the study of the love of God. In the present period of infirmities let us be content with the solution in our text; *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

2. But, in what manner have these miserable sinners (and this will explain the second mystery of love, which reason could never have discovered) in what manner have these miserable sinners, whom the justice of God condemns to eternal torments, received the declaration of their pardon? With what eyes have they considered the miracle of an incarnate God? How have they regarded that altar, on which such a noble victim was sacrificed for their salvation? Have their eyes been fountains of tears to lament the crimes, which brought down such a deluge of punishments upon the head of the Redeemer of mankind? Have they received the Redeemer with such tenderness and gratitude as the wonders of his love required? No: The unbelieving synagogue, the Jews, or, to pass the Jews, Christians, we, my brethren, who profess to believe the mystery of the cross; we, who every day say, *We believe in Jesus Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, who was crucified, dead, and buried,* we can hear of these great mysteries with indifference; we can persist in the very sins, that brought our Redeemer to the cross: we can refuse to give up a few inches of earth, a small sum of money, the playing of an idle game, or the gratifying of an absurd passion, to him who sacrificed for us his person and his life; we can *do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*, Heb. x. 29. God is witness of all these things; God holds the thunders in his mighty hands; wars and plagues, and famines and earthquakes, wait only for the first signal of his will to avenge those numerous indignities; yet God, who beholds those indignities, bears with them. This man, saith the love of God, is precipitated by the heat and vigour of youth, perhaps he may reflect when he arrives

at the tranquillity of mature age; he shall be spared then till he arrives at maturity; or, perhaps he may recollect himself in the coolness of old age, he shall be spared then till the grave coolness of old age comes. That man hath been a rebel in his health, perhaps he may submit when he is sick, he shall be spared till sickness comes; and he shall be sought, exhorted, conjured; I will say to him, *O that thou hadst hearkened unto me!* Psal. lxxxi. 13. *Be thou instructed, least my soul depart from thee!* Jer. vi. 8. *O thou who killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!* Matt. xxiii. 37. And it is the great God, who speaks in this manner to his ungrateful creature, who is insensible to such tender language!

3. The third mystery of love, which the wisest philosophers could never have discovered, is the union that God forms with man in religion. What tender relation canst thou imagine, which God hath not determined to form with thee in religion? Art thou sensible to the vigilance of a shepherd? *The Lord is thy shepherd, thou shalt not want,* Psal. xxiii. 1. Art thou sensible to the confidence of a friend? *I call thee not a servant, but a friend!* John xv. 15. Art thou sensible to the tenderness of a parent? *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon thee, that thou shouldest be called a son of God!* 1 John iii. 1. I should alledge many other images of the love of God to believers, if I could flatter myself, that the imaginations of my hearers would be as pure as those of the sacred authors who have described them.

Art thou disgusted with human connections? Are thine ideas of friendship so refined that they render thee superior to human unions, and make thee wish for a friendship formed on a nobler plan? God hath determined that thou shalt be united to him as Jesus Christ and he are united, John xvii. 20, 21. an union at present inconceivable, but which we shall happily experience in the enlarged sphere of an immortal life. Let us acknowledge then that all the penetration of the wisest philosophers could never have discovered the extent of the love of God in the dispensation of the gospel. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Secondly,

Secondly, We address the next to the gloomy mind of a melancholy person, who having failed in the courage necessary to resist temptations, fails again in that which is necessary to bear the thought of having fallen into them. But, before we oppose or describe this weakness, let us grant, there is something in it which deserves respect. The greatest part of those, who treat it as an extravagance, seem to me far more extravagant than those who fall into it. Yes, the utmost excess of grief, that can be occasioned by the remembrance of sin, seems to me incomparably less blameable than the excessive tranquillity of some other people's minds. Who (think ye?) is most extravagant, he who is too much affected with the enormity of his sins, or he who is not affected enough? Is it he who, notwithstanding his sorrows and regrets, dare not venture to believe himself an object of divine compassion; or he who, having no contrition, nor shedding any tears of repentance, presumes on that compassion? Is it he whom the bare probability of being punished for his sins, of being eternally confined in *chains of darkness*, of being an eternal prey to *the worm that never dieth*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. and of becoming fuel for that *fire which shall never be quenched*, Mark ix. 44, 45. depriveth of his rest, of a relish for the sweets of society, and of all inclination to enjoy the most insinuating pleasures; or, is it he who, in spite of so many reasons to fear his dangerous state, eats, drinks, diverts himself, runs from company to company, from circle to circle, and employs the moments, that are given him to avoid his miseries, in inventing the most effectual means of forgetting them? I repeat it again, a melancholy occasioned by the remembrance of sin, hath something respectable in it, and the greatest part of those, who treat it altogether as an absurdity, are more absurd than those who fall into it.

I intend, however, in this part of my discourse, to oppose this melancholy gloom. And thanks be to those divine mercies, the grandeurs of which I am this day commending, for furnishing me with so many means of opposing this disposition, independently on the words of my text. What a multitude of reflections present themselves beside those which arise from the subject in hand!

What madness possesseth thy melancholy mind? The holy Spirit assures thee, that *though thy sins be as scarlet*, he will make them *as white as snow*; that *though they be red like crimson*, he will make them as white as *wool*,

Isa. i. 18. and dost thou think thy sins are too aggravated to be pardoned in this manner?

The holy Spirit gives thee a long list of the most execrable names in nature; a list of idolaters, murderers, extortioners, adulterers, persecutors, highway robbers, and blasphemers, who obtained mercy when they desired and sought it: and art thou obstinately bent on excluding thyself from the number of those sinners, to whom mercy is promised; and, because thou dost not believe it attainable, dost thou obstinately refuse to ask for it?

The holy Spirit hath lifted up *an ensign for the nations*, Isa. xi. 12. or, to speak without a figure, the holy Ghost hath lifted up a cross, and on that cross a Redeemer, who is *able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him*, Heb. vii, 25. and who himself saith to all sinners, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*, Matt. xi. 28, 29. And dost thou flee from this cross, and rather choose to sink under the weight of thy sins than to disburden them on a Redeemer, who is willing to bear them?

But passing all these, let us return to the text. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* This is sufficient to refute, this is enough to subvert, and to destroy, the whole system of a despairing mind. The perfections of God are infinite: By what rule then dost thou pretend to *limit the holy one of Israel?* Psal. lxxviii. 14. *Canst thou by searching find out God?* Job. xi. 7. Canst thou find out the eternity of him, with whom *a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years?* 2 Pet. iii. 8. Canst thou find out the extent of his wisdom; a wisdom that first invented, then created, that governs now, and will for ever govern, both the material and the intelligent worlds? Behold, *his understanding is infinite!* Psal. cxlvii. 5. Canst thou find out the power of him, who *weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance*, who *taketh up the isles as a very little thing?* Isa. xl. 12. 15.

The mercy of God is no less inconceivable than the rest of his attributes. The nature of the thing proves it; reason declares it; revelation places it in the clearest light; experience confirms it; and of his mercy God saith in the text,

text, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Your thoughts have formed a gloomy system, and you think God can pardon a first, or a second, or perhaps a third sin, but you cannot believe that he can forgive the hundredth, or even the fortieth offence: But God's thoughts are, that he can *abundantly pardon*; that he can forgive the hundredth offence, yea the thousandth and the ten thousandth, as well as the first and the second, if you be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform them.

You think, agreeably to your gloomy system, that God doth indeed pardon some crimes, but that there are some which he will not pardon; that he sometimes pardoneth hatred, but that he will never forgive murder: that he sometimes pardoneth sins of infirmity, but that he will never forgive sins of obstinacy; that he pardoneth idle words, but that he will never forgive blasphemies: But God's thoughts are, that he will *abundantly pardon;* that he will pardon murder as well as hatred; and sins of obstinacy as well as sins of infirmity; provided you be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform them.

You think, consistently with your melancholy system, that God may perhaps pardon the sins of a few days, or of a few months, or of a few years; but that he cannot forgive the sins of ten, or twenty years, or of a whole life: But God thinks, he can *abundantly pardon*; that he cannot forgive the sins of ten years, or of twenty, or of a whole life, as well as the sins of one day, or of one month, or of one year; if you be sincerely willing to renounce them, and seriously endeavour to reform.

Your thoughts are that God pardoneth the sins of those whom he hath not called into church-fellowship, nor distinguished by particular favours: But the thoughts of God are, that he will *abundantly pardon;* that he will forgive sins committed under the mosaical dispensation as well as those committed under the dispensation of nature, those committed under the gospel, as well as those committed under the law, or before the law; if you be sincerely willing to renounce, and seriously endeavour to reform them. It is not I, it is the prophet, it is God himself, by the prophet, who attests these truths: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked* FOR-

SAKE

SAKE HIS WAY, *and the righteous man his thoughts; and let him* RETURN UNTO THE LORD, *and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for* HE WILL ABUNDANTLY PARDON. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

If you sincerely *forsake*, and seriously *reform* them. Have you not been surprized at the frequent repetition of this clause? This clause, however, is the ground of all the promises we make to you on God's part. The chief design of the prophet is to produce obedience to God, and in this we would wish to unite this whole assembly. Deprive the text of this clause, and the rest of the words are not only false and unwarrantable, but contradictory to themselves, and injurious to that God, whose mercy we have been publishing. We have no consolation for a melancholy man, who is resolved to persist in his sins. We have no remedy against despair, when the despairing man refuseth to renounce those crimes, the remembrance of which causeth all his distress and despair.

You slanderers, you false accusers, you pests of society, *God will abundantly pardon you.* Yea, though you have been wickedly industrious to poison the purest words, the most harmless actions, the holiest intentions, yet you ought not to despair of the mercy of God; *for his thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways.* He will forgive all your sins, if you sincerely forsake, and seriously reform them; if you do justice to the innocence you have attacked, and repair the reputations you have damaged.

You unjust, you oppressors, you extortioners, you who, as well as your ancestors, have lived on the substance of the wretched, and who are about to transmit an accursed patrimony to your posterity, *God will abundantly pardon* you: yea, though you have made a sale of justice, negotiated the blood of the miserable, betrayed the state, and sold your country, yet you ought not to despair of the mercy of God, for *his thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are his ways your ways.* All these sins he will forgive, if you endeavour seriously to amend them; if you lay aside those equipages, and retrench those sumptuous festivals, which are the

the fruits of your own, and of your parents, oppressions and extortions.

You sick, you dying people, who cannot think of your momentary life without thinking of those sins, which you have been perpetually committing, and in the multitude and magnitude of which your thoughts are lost, *God will abundantly pardon you.* Though no other time remains to conciliate your souls to God than the last days of a dying illness, the slight remains of a departing life, yet you ought not to despair of the mercy of God, *for his thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are his ways as your ways.* He will forgive all your sins, if you sincerely forsake, and seriously reform them; if you be animated not only with the fear of death and hell, but with a sincere desire of *returning unto the Lord;* if you do not make your pastor an accomplice in your sins; if you do not forbid him the mentioning of some of your sins; if you do not prevent the removal of that vail, which yet hides a great part of your turpitude from you; in a word, if you willingly fall in with all the ways of repentance and reparation, that may be opened to you.

I conclude with the clause, that I have so often repeated, and which I again repeat, (and woe be to him who forgets it! woe be to him who, by his perseverance in sin, rendereth his compliance impossible!) if you sincerely forsake, and seriously endeavour to reform and repair them. I give you a subject to meditate for the conclusion of this discourse, (a very terrible and alarming conclusion for those who have the madness to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness,)* Jude 4. this subject, which I leave with you to meditate, is, What degree of punishment in hell will be inflicted upon such men as despise the mercy that we have been describing? God grant you may never be able to answer this by your own experience! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

THE SEVERITY OF GOD.

HEBREWS xii. 29.

For our God is a consuming fire.

IT is a very deplorable thing, that your preachers can never expatiate on the goodness of God, without having just grounds to fear that you infer dangerous consequences from their doctrine. That goodness, of which God hath made such tender declarations; that goodness, of which he hath given us such astonishing proofs; that goodness, which seems so proper to make us love him above all things; that goodness, through our abuse of it, contributes the most, to rivet our infidelity, and to increase our misery. We freely acknowledge, therefore, that with fear and trembling we endeavoured last Lord's day to display its greatness, and, though all our portraits were infinitely beneath the original, though we esteemed it then our happiness, and our glory, not to be able to reach our subject, yet we have been afraid of having said too much. When, to prevent the fatal effects of despair, we assured you, that, though you had trafficed with the blood of the oppressed, or betrayed the state, or sold your country, yet you might derive from the ocean of divine mercy a pardon for all these crimes, provided you were enabled sincerely to repent, and thoroughly to reform them; when we said these things, we revolved in our minds these discouraging thoughts: Perhaps some of our hearers may poison our doctrine: Perhaps some monster, of which nature produceth an example in every age, actually saith to himself; I may then, without despairing of my salvation, traffic with the blood of the oppressed, betray the state, sell my country, and, having spent my life in these wicked prac-

tices, turn to God on my death-bed. You will allow, we hope, that the bare probability of our having occasioned so dangerous a wound, ought to engage us to attempt to heal it, by contrasting to day the goodness of God with his severity.

The text we have chosen is the language of St. Paul, *Our God is a consuming fire;* and, it is worthy of observation, we have scrupulously imitated the apostle's example in making this subject immediately succeed that which we explained last Lord's day. The gospel of last Lord's day was a passage in Isaiah, *God will abundantly pardon, for his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts,* ch. lv. 7. The gospel of this day is, *Our God is a consuming fire.* St. Paul hath made a similar arrangement, and him we have imitated. In the verses which precede our text he hath described, in a very magnificent manner, the goodness of God in the dispensation of the gospel. He hath exalted the condition of a christian, not only above that of the heathens, who knew the mercy of God only by natural reason, but even above that of the Jews, who knew it by revelation, but from whom it was partly hidden under vails of severity and rigour. *Ye are not come,* said he, *unto the mount that be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,* ver. 18, &c. But what consequences hath the apostle drawn from all these truths? Are they consequences of security and indifference, such as some christians draw from them, such as some of you, it may be, drew from the prophet's doctrine last Lord's day? No; they are consequences of vigilance and fear: *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that*

that speaketh from heaven; for our God is a consuming fire, ver. 25.

Our God is a consuming fire. These words are metaphorical; they include even a double metaphor. God is here represented under the emblem of fire, agreeably to what the psalmist saith, *Shall thy wrath burn like fire?* Psal. lxxxix. 46. There is no difficulty in this first metaphor. But the second, which representeth the conduct of God towards impenitent sinners as *wrath*, *vengeance*, *anger*, is very difficult, and requires a particular explication. In order to which we will attempt three things.

I. We will endeavour to harmonize our text with other parallel passages, and to give you distinct ideas of that which is called in God *wrath*, *anger*, *vengeance*, and which occasioned our apostle to say *God is a consuming fire.*

II. We will prove that this attribute agrees to God in the sense that we shall have given.

III. We will endeavour to reconcile the doctrine we preach to day with that which we preached last Lord's day; the justice of God with his goodness; and by this mean to engage you to love and adore God as much when he threateneth as when he promiseth, as much when he presents his justice as when he displays his mercy. This is the whole plan of this discourse.

I. We will endeavour to give you distinct notions of that which the scripture calls the *wrath*, the *anger*, the *vengeance* of God.

Recollect a remark, which we have often made, that is, that when the scripture speaks of the perfections and operations of God it borroweth images from the affections and actions of men. Things that cannot be known to us by themselves can be understood only by analogy, as it is called, that is, by the resemblance they bear to other things, with which we are better acquainted. Divine things are of this kind.

From this remark follows a precaution, which is necessary for the avoiding of error whenever we meet with an emblem of this kind descriptive of God in the holy scriptures; that is, that we must carefully lay aside every part of the emblem, that agreeth only to men from whom it is borrowed, and apply only that part to the Deity which is compatible with the eminence of his perfections.

Sometimes the part that ought to be laid aside is so obvious that it is impossible to mistake it. For example, When the scripture attributeth to God hands, or feet, sorrow, or tears, or jealousy, it is very easy, methinks, to separate from emblems of this sort all that can only agree with the natures of frail, or with the conditions of sinful men.

But sometimes it is not quite so easy. The difficulty may proceed from several causes, of all which I shall mention but one at present, and to that I entreat your attention. Some men have false notions of grandeur, and none are more likely to entertain such notions than those divines, who have breathed only the air of the study, and trodden only the dust of the schools. Such divines, having never sweetened their manners by a social intercourse with rational people in the world, have often contracted in that way of life, a sour, morose disposition, and their tempers have tinged their ideas of grandeur and glory. I am greatly inclined to believe that some ideas, which several school-men have formed of the liberty and independence of God, have arisen from this disposition. Divines, who had sweetened their manners by associating with rational people in the world, would have attributed to God a noble and magnanimous use of his liberty and independence. They would have said, God is free and independent, then he will always do justly and equitably; then he will require of mankind only that which bears a proportion to the talents he hath given them; then misery will be the consequence of nothing but vice, and felicity will always follow virtue. If the scriptures sometimes represent God by emblems, which seem opposite to these notions, sensible men would have considered, that one part of them ought to have been cautiously separated from the other, because it was incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. But these school-divines have attributed to God such a conduct as their own savage tempers would have observed, had they been vested with divine power. To each of them the prophet's reproach may be very properly applied, *These things hast thou done, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, Psal. l. 21. They said, God is free, therefore he may appoint men, who have done neither good nor evil, to eternal flames. God is free, therefore he may create men on purpose that they may sin, and that he may display his wrath in their punishment.

II. Here

II. Here let us stop, and let us keep to the subject in hand, by observing that those emblems of wrath and vengeance, under which God is represented to us, have one part that cannot be attributed to him, because it is not compatible with the eminence of his perfections, and another, that must be applied to him because it is.

1. It is a consequence of the frailty or of the depravity of men, that their *anger* inclines them to hate those whom they ought to love, and in whose happiness they ought to interest themselves, as far as they can without violating the laws of equity. Such a hatred cannot be attributed to God; he loves all his intelligent creatures, and when we are told that *the Lord hateth a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood*, Prov. vi. 17. when he is represented as refusing some real blessings to mankind, as *hardening their hearts*, Exod. iv. 21. as *sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie*, 2 Thess. ii. 11. All these descriptions mean that he dislikes sin, and all those who commit it; that it is not always consistent with the eminence of his perfections to work miracles for their conversion; and that it is not fit to reform by a physical power, which would destroy the nature of vice and virtue, men who refuse to be reformed by a moral power, which is suited to intelligent beings.

2. It is a consequence of human frailty or depravity, that men's *wrath* makes them taste a barbarous pleasure in tormenting those who are the objects of it, and in feasting as it were on their miseries. This is incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. When he saith to impenitent sinners, *I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh*, Prov. i. 26. when he saith, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. when Moses saith to the Jews, *It shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought*, Deut. xxviii. 63. all the meaning of passages of this kind is, that the wisdom of God approveth the judgments which his justice inflicts; that the punishments of sinners cannot affect his happiness; and that when he hath not been glorified in their conversion, he will be glorified in their destruction.

3. It is a consequence of the frailty or of the depravity of men, that their *anger* disorders their bodies, and impairs their minds. See, the eyes sparkle, the mouth foams, the animal spirits are in a flame; these obscure the faculties of the

the mind, and prevent the weighing of those reasons that plead for the guilty offender; anger pre-judgeth him, and in spite of many powerful pleas in his favour, his ruin is resolved. All these are incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God. *God is a spirit*, John. iv. 24. he is not subject to revolutions of sense; reasons of punishing a sinner never divert his attention from motives of pardoning the man, or of moderating his pain. When, therefore, God is represented as *shaking the earth, and moving the foundations of the hills, because he is wroth;* when we read, that *there went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth*, Psal. xviii. 7, 8. when he, who is called the *word of God*, is described as treading *the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of almighty God*, Rev. xix. 13, 15. we understand no more than that God knoweth how to proportion the punishment to the sin, and that he will inflict the most rigorous penalties on the most atrocious crimes.

4. It is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men that their *anger* makes them usurp a right which belongs to God. An individual who avengeth himself, assumes the place of that God who hath said, *vengeance is mine*, Rom. xii. 19. at least, he assumes the place of the magistrate, to whom God hath committed the sword for the preventing of these disorders, which would subvert society, if each were judge in his own cause. This is incompatible with the eminence of the divine perfections. God useth his own right when he punisheth sin, agreeably to the doctrine of St. Paul, *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* What is this *wrath*, to which we are required to *give place?* It is the anger of God. *Avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath;* that is, be not hasty in revenging injuries, your self-love may magnify them, and the punishment which you inflict may exceed the offence; leave vengeance to God, who knoweth how to weigh the injuries you have received in an impartial scale, and to inflict such punishments on the guilty as their crimes deserve.

5. It is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men, that time doth not abate their resentment, and that the only reason which prevents the rendering of evil for evil, is a want of opportunity; as soon as an opportunity offers they eagerly embrace it. This is incompatible with the eminence of the perfections of God; he hath at all times the means of punishing

ing the guilty. When we are told, therefore, that he *sets our iniquities before him, our secret sins in the light of his countenance*, Psal. xc. 8. when, having reprieved the Israelites at the request of Moses, he told him, *in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them*, Exod. xxxii. 34. we only understand, that time never removes an idea from his mind; and that if a sinner do not improve the time, which is granted to him for his repentance, he will be punished when that period expires.

6. In fine, it is a consequence of the frailty and depravity of men, that their *anger* puts them upon considering and punishing a pardonable frailty as an atrocious crime. This is incompatible with the eminence of the divine perfections. If we imagine God acts so, in any cases, it is because we have false notions of sins, and think that a pardonable frailty which is an atrocious crime. Sometimes an action, that appears tolerable to us, is an atrocious crime, on account of the motive from which it proceeds. Such was that of Hezekiah; he shewed his treasures to the Babylonian ambassadors, and although this may seem very pardonable, yet it was an atrocious crime, which appears by the following passage: *Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him: for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem*, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. An action, that may appear to us very tolerable, is sometimes a heinous crime, on account of the singularity of the favour which preceded it. Such was the conduct of Lot's wife: she looked back towards Sodom, which, although it may seem very pardonable, was yet a heinous crime, because she disobeyed the express command of her benefactor, who had just delivered her from the destruction of Sodom; and therefore she was instantly petrified. An action, that may seem very tolerable to us, is sometimes a very atrocious crime, on account of the little temptation which the offender had to commit it. Such was the action of that man who *gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day*, Numb. xv. 32. and although this may seem very tolerable to us, yet it was a heinous offence, because it was very easy to abstain from it, and therefore he was stoned. An action, that may seem very pardonable to us, may be a heinous crime, on account of the dignity of the offender. Such was that of Nadab and Abihu; they offered strange fire to the Lord, and although it may appear very pardonable to us, yet it was an atrocious crime, for Nadab and Abihu

Abihu were ministers of holy things, Levit. x. 1, 2. and they ought to have given examples of exact and scrupulous obedience, accordingly they were consumed with fire from heaven.

Thus we have gone through our first article, and have endeavoured to give you distinct ideas of that which the scripture calls in God, *wrath, anger, consuming fire.*

Moreover, in explaining the meaning of the proposition in the text, we have collected several passages, and alledged several examples, which prove the truth under our consideration. The explication of this proposition, *our God is a consuming fire*, proves its truth in the sense in which we have explained it. We leave the enlargement of this article to your meditation, then, and proceed to the next.

III. We are to conciliate what the scripture saith of the goodness of God with what it saith of his anger or vengeance: the gospel of last Lord's day with the gospel of this day: and, as the two subjects never appear more irreconcileable than when, having used all our endeavours to terrify people who defer their conversion till a dying-illness, we actually take pains to comfort those who have deferred it till that time, we will endeavour to harmonize the goodness and justice of God in that particular point of view.

First, Let us endeavour, in a general view, to reconcile the goodness of God with his justice, by laying down a few principles.

1. To speak properly, there are not several perfections in God; but there is one single excellence, inclusive of every other, that ariseth from all his perfections, but of which it is not possible we can either form any complete ideas, or easily express by any name: in general, it may be called order, or love of order. Order, in regard to finite and dependent beings, is that disposition which induced them to act agreeably to their relations to other intelligent beings: to the faculties which the Creator hath given them; to the talents they have received; and to the circumstances in which they are placed. Order, in regard to God, who is an infinite and an independent intelligence, is that disposition, which induceth him always to act agreeably to the eminence of his perfections.

2. Although God hath only a general excellence, yet it is necessary for us to divide it into several particular excellencies, in order to the obtaining of some knowledge of an object, the immensity of which will not allow us to comprehend it at once. We are obliged to use this method in studying

dying finite objects, whenever their sphere extends beyond the comprehension of a single act of the mind: And, if finite objects can be known only by this method, for a much stronger reason we must be allowed to use the same method of obtaining the knowledge of the great and infinite Being.

3. The general excellence of God being thus divided into parts, each part becomes what we call a perfection, or an attribute of God, as vengeance or justice, and goodness: but each particular attribute will be still mistaken unless we subdivide it again into other, and still more contracted spheres. Thus, when God sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, we call the blessing simply *bounty*. When he delivereth us out of our afflictions, we call it *compassion*. When he pardoneth our sins, we call it *mercy*. But as all these particular excellencies proceed from that general attribute which we call *goodness*, so that attribute itself proceedeth, as well as his justice, from an excellence more general still, which we have denominated order, or love of order.

4. Perfections, that proceed from the same perfection, or rather, which are the same perfections applied to different subjects, cannot be contrary to each other. Strictly speaking, God is no more just than good, no more good than just. His goodness is restrained by his justice, his justice by his goodness. He delighteth as much in the exercise of his justice, when order requires it, as in the exercise of his goodness, when order requires him to exercise it: or, to express the same thing more plainly, that which is goodness, when it is applied to one case, would cease to be goodness, were it applied to a different case, because, in the latter, goodness would not be restrained by justice: or, to express myself more plainly still, because order, which alloweth the exercise of goodness in the first case, doth not allow the exercise of it in the last, so that what would be fit, or agreeable to order, in the first case, would be unfit or disorderly in the last.

To conclude. God is as amiable and adorable when he exerciseth his justice, as when he exerciseth his goodness. That which makes me adore God, believe his word, hope in his promises, and love him above all things, is the eminence of his perfections. Were not God possessed of such an eminence of perfections, he would not be a proper object of adoration. I should be in danger of being deceived were I to believe his word, or to trust his promise, and I should be guilty of idolatry, were I to love him with that supreme affection,

fection, which is due to none but the Supreme Being. But, the goodness and justice of God being equal emanations of the eminence of his perfections, and of his love of order, I ought equally to adore and love him when he rewardeth, and when he punisheth, when he exerciseth his justice, and when he exerciseth his goodness; because, in either case, he alike displayeth that general excellence, that love of order, which is the ground of my love and obedience. I ought to adore and love him, as much when he drowns the world, as when he promiseth to drown it no more; when he unlocks the gates of hell, as when he openeth the doors of heaven; when he saith to the impenitent, *Depart, ye cursed, to the devil and his angels*, as when he saith to his elect, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 41, 34.

The justice and the goodness of God, then, are in perfect harmony; the gospel of last Lord's-day, and the gospel of this day, entirely agree; the prophet and the apostle preach the same doctrine, and the two texts rightly understood, *God is a consuming fire; the Lord will abundantly pardon;* both these texts, I say, present the same object to us, the eminence of the divine perfections, God's love of order. This is what we proposed to prove.

Let us now apply this general harmony of the goodness and severity of God to the removing of a seeming inconsistency in the conduct of your preachers and casuists, who first use every effort to alarm and terrify your minds with the idea of a death-bed repentance, and afterwards take equal pains to comfort you, when you have deferred your repentance to that time, and when your case appears desperate.

Why do we not despair of a man who delays his conversion till the approach of death? Why did we tell you last Lord's-day, that God pardoneth not only the sins of months and years, but of a whole life? Because that order, which constitutes the eminence of the divine perfections, doth not allow that a sincere conversion, a conversion that abandons the sin, and renews the sinner, should be rejected by God. Now we cannot absolutely deny the possibility of a sincere death-bed conversion for the following reasons.

1. Because it is not absolutely impossible, that a violent fit of sickness, or an apprehension of death, should make deeper impressions on the mind, than either sermons, or exhortations, or books of devotion could ever produce. This reflection is the more solid, because the phrase, an *unconverted* man,

man, is extremely equivocal. We call him an *unconverted* man, who profanely rusheth into all sorts of sins, and who never made one sacrifice to order; and we also, with great reason, call him an *unconverted* man, who hath renounced all sins except one. Now the idea of death may finish, in the souls of people of the latter sort, a work which they had indeed neglected, but which however was actually begun.

2. Because we are neither so fully acquainted with other people's hearts, nor indeed with our own, as to determine whether sin have so entirely depraved all the faculties of the soul, that it is past remedy; or, whether it have arrived at that precise degree of corruption, to which the eminence of the divine perfections doth not allow a display of that efficacy, which is promised to those who desire the grace of conversion.

3. Because we find, in the holy scriptures, that some have obtained mercy, after they had committed the very crimes, the remembrance of which we have said, ought not to drive any to despair. We meet with, at least, one example, which affords a probability, (I do not say a demonstration) that the eminence of the divine perfections doth not always require, that a man, who hath spent his life in robberies, should be excluded from the mercy of God. We find there a thief who was condemned to be crucified, and who said to the companion of his iniquities and miseries, *we receive the due rewards of our deeds*, Luke xxiii. 41. but who, notwithstanding all the misery of his case, applied to Jesus Christ, and, from his adorable mouth, received this comfortable promise, *Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, ver. 43.

4. Because we still see people, who, having lived thirty, yea fifty years in sin, have been converted in a time of sickness, and who, being restored to health, give full proof of the reality of their conversion. Such examples, I own, are rare, and almost unheard of, yet we could, perhaps, mention two or three, out of twenty thousand sick people, whom we have visited, or of whom we have heard, in the course of our ministry. Now the examples of two or three, who have been converted on a sick-bed, out of twenty thousand who have died without conversion, are sufficient to prevent our saying to one dying man, who should have put off his repentance to the last hour, that it is impossible for him to be converted.

5. Because God worketh miracles in religion as well as in nature; and because no man hath a sufficient knowledge of the nature of God's perfections to enable him to affirm that a miracle cannot, or ought not to be wrought in behalf of such a sinner.

6. Because we cannot find, that your pastors have any authority from their bibles to say to a penitent sinner, at any time, there is no more hope for thee; thou hast exhausted the mercy of God; thou art gotten to that period, in which we have no other morality to preach than this, *he that is unjust, let him be unjust still*; *and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. On the contrary, all the directions in the holy scriptures, that relate to the exercise of our ministry, engage us to pray for a sinner, as long as he hath a spark of life; to endeavour to convince him as long as he is capable of reasoning; and, till he is past feeling the force of motives to conversion, to do every thing, that is in our power, to convert him. But doth not all this conduct suppose that which we have been endeavouring to prove? that is, that to what degree soever a sinner may have carried his sin, how long soever he may have lived in it, there will always be a sufficiency of pardon, where there is a certainty of conversion; agreeably to the gospel that we preached to you on the last Lord's-day, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon: For my thoughts* of grace and mercy must not be measured by the ideas of the finest reasoning powers; much less by those of a gloomy desponding mind, *my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* This was the gospel of last Lord's-day.

The gospel of this day is, *our God is a consuming fire.* But these two gospels entirely agree, and our endeavours to comfort you, after you have deferred your conversion to a death-bed, are not inconsistent with our endeavours to terrify and alarm you, when we perceive that you obstinately determine to defer your repentance to that time. Moreover, the same reasons, which prevail with us to comfort you in that sad period,

tiod, prevail with us to give you a salutary alarm before the fatal moment comes.

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts;* and it is possible that the approach of death may make deeper impressions on you, than either sermons or pious books have made; But yet *our God is a consuming fire.* What a time is a dying illness for the receiving of such impressions! I omit those sudden and unexpected deaths, of which we have so many yearly, or rather daily examples. I omit the sudden deaths of those, who, while we were conversing and transacting business with them, were seized with violent pains, turned pale, and died, and were instantly stretched on a bier. I pass those who went to bed healthy and well, who quietly fell asleep, and whom we have found in the morning dead and cold. All these melancholy examples we omit, for one would imagine, considering your conduct, and hearing your conversation, that each of you had received a revelation to assure him of an exemption from sudden death. But what a time is a dying illness for a renovation and conversion! Would not one suppose, that those, who hope to be converted then, have always lived among immortals, and have neither heard of death, nor seen a person die? Ah! What obstacles! What a world of obstacles oppose such extravagant hopes, and justify the efforts of those who endeavour to destroy them! Here, is business, that must be settled; a will, which must be made; a number of articles that must be discussed: there, are friends, who must be embraced; relations that must be dissolved; children, who must be torn away; the soul must be writhen and rent and riven asunder with sighs and adieus. Here, arise frightful ideas of death, which have never entered the mind but amidst numberless hurries of necessary business, or countless objects of deceitful pleasures; ideas of a death, that hath been always considered at a distance, though so many voices have announced its approach; but the approach of which now astonishes, benumbs, and renders motionless: There, the illness increaseth, pains multiply, agonies convulse, the whole soul, full of intolerable sensations, loseth the power of seeing and hearing, thinking and reflecting. Here, are medicines more intolerable than the malady, operations more violent than the agonies which they are designed to allay: There, conscience, for the first time, enlightened, awaked, and alarmed, rolls in tides of remorse: the terrible remembrance of a life spent

spent in sin; an army of irrefragable witnesses, from all parts arising, prove the guilt, and denounce a sentence of death, on the departing soul. See now, whether this first reflection, which authorizeth our endeavours to comfort and invigorate your souls, when you have deferred your conversion to your last hour, be inconsistent with those which we use to terrify and alarm you, when you obstinately put off your repentance to that time?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and we have neither a sufficient knowledge of other people's hearts, nor of our own, to affirm with certainty when their faculties are entirely contaminated: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* We know men, to whom the truth is become unintelligible, in consequence of the disguise in which they have taken the pains to clothe it; and who have accustomed themselves to palliate vice, till they are become incapable of perceiving its turpitude.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, it is true; and we have seen some examples of people, who have proved, since their recovery, that they were truly converted in sickness; and on whose account we presume that others may possibly be converted by the same mean: But yet *our God is a consuming fire.* How rare are these examples! Doth this require proof? Must we demonstrate it? You are our proofs: you, yourselves, are our demonstrations. Who of you, (I speak of those who are of mature age) Who of you hath not been sick, and thought himself in danger of death? Who hath not made resolutions in that distressing hour, and promised God to reform? The law of these exercises forbids certain details, and prohibits the naming of my hearers: but I appeal to your consciences, and, if your consciences be asleep, I appeal to the immortal God. How many of you have deposited your resolutions with us, and have solemnly engaged to renounce the world with all its sinful maxims? How many of you have imposed upon us by appearances of conversion, and have imposed upon yourselves too? How many of you should we have alledged as new examples of death-bed conversions, if God had not granted you a recovery? Are you converted indeed? Have you renounced the world and its maxims? Ah! were we to judge, by the conduct of those who have recovered, of the state of those who are dead . . . . . My brethren, I dare not examine the matter, but I leave it to your meditation.

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It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts;* and God worketh miracles in religion as well as in nature: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* Who can assure himself that, having abused common grace, he shall obtain extraordinary assistances?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts;* and there is nothing in the holy scriptures, which empowers us to shut the gates of heaven against a dying penitent; we have no authority to tell you, that there is no more hope for you, but that you are lost without remedy: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* There are hundreds of passages in our bibles, which authorize us, what am I saying? there are hundreds of passages that command us, under the penalty of suffering all the punishments that belong to the crime, not to conceal any thing from the criminal: there are hundreds of passages which empower and enjoin us to warn you, you who are fifty years of age; you, who are sixty; you, who are fourscore; that still to put off the work of your conversion is a madness, an excess of inflexibility and indolence, which all the flames of hell can never expiate.

To conclude. This is an article, of which we, your pastors, hope to give a good account to God, however unworthy we are of his approbation. How often have we represented the danger of your procrastinations? Ye walls of this church! were ye capable of giving evidence, we would take you to witness. But we appeal to you, ye sermons, that have been preached in this assembly! ye shall be recollected in that great day, in which each of our hearers shall give an account of the use he hath made of you. Ye consciences that have heard our directions! ye shall bear witness. You gainsayers! you yourselves shall bear witness, you who, by reversing those ideas which the gospel giveth us of the mercy of God, have so often pretended to obscure those which we have endeavoured to give of his justice and vengeance; *We are pure from your blood, we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,* Acts xx. 26, 27. When we stand at his tribunal, and, under a sense of the weakness with which our ministry was accompanied, say to him, *Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord!* Psal. cxliii. 2. Each of us will venture to add, with a view to the importunity that had been used to prevail with you to improve your precious moments, *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo,*

lo, I have not refrained my lips; O Lord, thou knowest. With-hold not thou thy tender mercies from me O Lord, Psal. xl. 9, 11. *I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God,* Isa. xlix. 4.

O! may God animate us with more noble motives! God grant, not that the eternal misery of our hearers may be the apology of our ministry: but that you may be our *joy and crown in the day of Christ!* Phil. iv. 1. and i. 10. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON X.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD WITH WICKED NATIONS.

GENESIS xv. 16.

The Iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

IT is a shocking disposition of mind, which Solomon describes in that well known passage in Ecclesiastes: *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*, chap. viii. 11. It seems, at first sight, as if the wise man had rather exceeded in his portrait of the human heart: or that, if there were any originals, they could only be a few monsters, from whose souls were eradicated all the seeds of religion and piety, as well as every degree of reason and humanity. God is patient towards all who offend him: then, let us offend him without remorse, let us try the utmost extent of his patience. God lifteth over our heads a mighty hand, armed with lightnings and thunderbolts, but this hand is usually suspended a while before it strikes; then let us dare it while it delays, and till it moves to crush us to pieces let us not respect it. What a disposition! What a shocking disposition of mind is this my brethren!

But let us rend the vails with which we conceal ourselves from ourselves; let us penetrate those secret recesses of our consciences, into which we never look but when we are forced; let us go to the bottom of a heart naturally *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, and we shall find that this disposition of mind, which at first sight inspires us with horror, is the disposition—of whom? Of the greatest part of

this assembly, my brethren. Could we persist in sin without the patience of God? Dare we live in that shameful security, with which the ministers of the living God so justly reproach us, if God had authorized them to cry in our streets, *Yet forty days, yet forty days?* Jonah iii. Had we seen Ananias and Sapphira fall at St. Peter's feet, as soon as they *kept back part of the price of their possession,* Acts v. 1, 2. In a word, could we have the madness to add sin to sin, if we were really convinced, that God entertained the formidable design of bearing with us no longer, but of precipitating us into the gulphs of hell on the very first act of rebellion? Why then do we rebel every day? It is for the reason alledged by the wise man: It is *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

I intend to-day, my brethren, to endeavour to dissipate the dark clouds, with which your security obscures the designs of a patient God, who hath been patient towards you; *long-suffering towards all,* 2 Pet. iii. 9. and who is exercising his patience towards you this day. But who can tell how much longer he intends to bear with you? Let us enter into the matter. I design to consider our text principally with a view to *the riches of the forbearance, and long-suffering of God,* Rom. ii. 4. for it treats of a mystery of justice which interests all mankind. God bears with the most wicked nations a long while, and, having borne a long while with the rebellion of ancestors, bears also a long while with that of their descendants: but, at length, collecting the rebellion of both into one point of vengeance, he punisheth a people who have abused his patience, and proportioneth his punishments to the length of time which had been granted to avert them.

All these solemn truths are included in the sententious words of the text: *The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* I hasten to explain them, in order to employ the most of the precious moments of attention, with which you deign to favour me, in deriving such practical instructions from them as they afford. Promote our design, my dear brethren. Let not the forbearance which the love of God now affords you *set your hearts fully to do evil.* And thou, O almighty and long-suffering God! whose treasures of forbearance perhaps this nation may have already exhausted! O thou just

avenger

avenger of sin! who perhaps mayest be about to punish our crimes, now ripe for vengeance, O suspend its execution till we make some profound reflections on the objects before us! O let the ardent prayers of our Abrahams, and of our Lots, prevail with thee to lengthen the forbearance which thou hast already exercised toward this church, these provinces, and every sinner in this assembly! Amen.

The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. These words were addressed to Abraham by God himself. He had just before given him a victory over five kings, and had promised him blessings more glorious than all those which he had received before. He had said to him, *Fear not, I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward*, Gen. xv. 1. But the patriarch thought, these great promises could not be accomplished, because he had no posterity, and was far advanced in age, ver. 2, 4. God relieves him from this fear by promising him, not only a son, but a posterity, ver. 5. which should equal the stars of heaven in number, and should possess a country as extensive as their wants: but at the same time he told him, that before the accomplishment of these promises, his seed should be either strangers in the land of Canaan, ver. 13. the conquest of which should be reserved for them, or subject to the Egyptians, for the space of four hundred years: that at the expiration of that period, they should quit their slavery, laden with the spoils of Egypt: that *in the fourth generation*, ver. 16. they should return into the land of Canaan, where Abraham dwelt when the Lord addressed these words to him: that then they should conquer the country, and should be the ministers of God's vengeance on the Canaanites, whose abominations even now deserved severe punishments, but which God would at present defer, because the wretched people had not yet filled up the measure of their crimes.

This is a general view of our text in connection with the context. *Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace: thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

If you would understand these words more particularly, attend to a few remarks, which we shall only mention in brief, because a discussion of them would divert our attention too far from the principal design of this discourse*.

We include in the *four hundred years*, mentioned in the contest, the time the Israelites dwelt in Canaan from the birth of Isaac, and the time they dwelt in Egypt from the promotion of Joseph. Indeed, strictly speaking, these two periods contain *four hundred and five years.* But every body knows that authors, both sacred and profane, to avoid fractions, sometimes add, and sometimes diminish, in their calculations. In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, ver. 40. Moses saith, *The children of Israel dwelt in Egypt four hundred and thirty years;* but it is beyond a doubt, that he useth a concise way of speaking in this passage, and that the Seventy had reason for paraphrasing the words thus: *The sojourning of the children of Israel* IN THE LAND OF CANAAN, AND *in the land of Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.* If the reasonableness of this paraphrase be allowed, there will still remain a difference of thirty years between the time fixed in Genesis by the Lord for the conquest of Canaan, and the time mentioned by Moses in Exodus, but it is easy to reconcile this seeming difference, for the calculation in Genesis begins at the birth of Isaac, but the other commences at Abraham's arrival in Canaan. The reckoning is exact, for Abraham dwelt twenty-five years in Canaan before Isaac was born, and there were four hundred and five years from the birth of Isaac to the departure out of Egypt. This is the meaning of the passage quoted from Exodus, and as it perfectly agrees with our context, we shall conclude that this first article is sufficiently explained.

Our second regards the meaning of the word *generation*, which is mentioned in the context. This term is equivocal: sometimes it signifies the whole age of each person in a succession; and in this sense the evangelist says, *from Abraham to David are fourteen generations*, Matt. i. 17. Sometimes it is put for the whole duration of a living multitude; and in this sense Jesus Christ useth it, when he saith, *this generation*, that is, all his contemporaries, *shall not pass away, till* his prophecies concerning them were *fulfilled.* Sometimes it signifies a period of ten years; and in this sense it

* This whole subject is treated at large in Mons. Saurin's fourteenth dissertation on the Bible. Tom. Prem.

it is used in the book of Baruch; the captivity in Babylon, which continued, we know, seventy years, is there said to remain *seven generations*, chap. vi. 2.

We understand the word now in the first sense, and we mean that, from the arrival of the Israelites in Egypt, to the time of their migration, there were four successions: The first was the *generation of Kohath*, the son of Levi; the second of *Amram* the son of Kohath; the third was that of *Moses* and Aaron; and the fourth was that of *the children* of Moses and Aaron, Exod. vi. 16, 18, 20, &c.

Our third observation relates to the word *Amorites* in our text. *The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* The word Amorites hath two significations in scripture: a particular, and a general meaning. It hath a particular meaning when it denotes the descendants of Hamor, the fourth son of Canaan, Gen. x. 16. who first inhabited a mountainous country westward of the dead sea, Josh. xii. 23. and afterwards spread themselves eastward of that sea, between the rivers Jabbok and Arnon, having dispossessed the Amorites and Moabites. Sihon and Og, two of their kings, were defeated by Moses.

But the word *Amorites* is sometimes used in a more general sense, and denotes all the inhabitants of Canaan. To cite many proofs would divert our attention too far from our principal design, let it suffice therefore to observe, that we take the word in our text in this general meaning.

But what crimes does the Spirit of God include in the word *iniquity? The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Here, my brethren, a detail would be horrid, for so great were the excesses of these people, that we should in some sense partake of their crimes, by attempting to give an exact list of them. So excessive was the idolatry of the Canaanites, that they rendered the honours of supreme adoration not only to the most mean, but even to the most impure and infamous creatures. Their inhumanity was so excessive that they sacrificed their own children to their gods. And so monstrous was their subversion, not only of the laws of nature, but even of the common irregularities of human nature, that a vice, which must not be named, was openly practised; and in short, so scandalous was the depravation of religion and good manners, that Moses, after he had given the Israelites laws against the most gross idolatry, against incest, against beastiality, against that other crime, which our dismal circumstances oblige us to mention, in spite of so many

many reasons for avoiding it; Moses, I say, after having forbidden all these excesses to the Israelites, positively declares that the Canaanites were guilty of them all: that the earth was weary of such execrable monsters; and that for these crimes God had sent the Israelites to destroy them, chap. xviii. 24, 25. *Defile not yourselves*, says he in the book of Leviticus (after an enumeration of the most shameful vices that can be imagined) *Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these, the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. Therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.* And again in the 12th chapter of Deuteronomy, ver. 30. *Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not . . . . saying, How did these nations . . . . even so will I do likewise.* Such were the iniquities which God forbore to punish for many ages, and at last punished with a severity, in appearance, contrary to his equity; but there is nothing astonishing in it to those who consult the fore-mentioned maxim, that is, that it is equitable in God to proportion the punishments of guilty nations to the time granted for their repentance.

We observe lastly, that though God in his infinite mercy had determined to bear *four hundred years* longer with nations, unworthy of his patience, there was one sin excepted from this general goodness—there was one of their iniquities that drew down the most formidable preternatural punishments upon those who committed it, and forced divine justice to anticipate, by a swift vengeance, a punishment, which in other cases, was deferred for four whole ages. St. Paul paints this iniquity in the most odious colours in the first of Romans, and it was constantly punished with death by the Jews. Read with a holy fear the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. The inhabitants of the cities of the plain were possessed with a more than brutal madness. Two angels in human forms are sent to deliver Lot from the judgments which are about to destroy them. The amiable borrowed forms of these intelligences strike the eyes of the inhabitants of Sodom, and excite their abominable propensities to sin. A crowd of people, young and old, instantly surround the house of Lot, in order to seize the celestial messengers, and to offer violence to them, and though they are stricken blind they persist in feeling for doors which they cannot see. Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, being inhabited by

by none but people of this abominable kind, are all given up to the vengeance due to their crimes. *The Lord raineth fire and brimstone from the Lord*, Gen. xix. 24. The brimstone enkindled, penetrates so far into the veins of bitumen, and other inflammable bodies, of which the ground is full, that it forms a lake, denominated in scripture the *Dead Sea:* and, to use the words of an apocryphal writer, *the waste land that smoketh, and plants bearing fruit that never come to ripeness, are even to this day a testimony of the wickedness of the five cities*, Wisdom x. 7. In vain had Lot *vexed his righteous soul from day to day*, 2 Pet. ii. 8. In vain had Abraham availed himself of all the interest that piety gave him in the compassion of a merciful God; in vain had the abundance of his fervent benevolence said, *Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes: Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; peradventure forty; peradventure twenty; peradventure ten*, Gen. xviii. 23, 27, &c. The decree of divine vengeance must be executed. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth*, Psal. ii. 10. God grant you may never know any thing more of these terrible executions than what you learn from the history just now related!

I return to my subject, except to that part of it last mentioned, the sin of the cities of the plain. The iniquities of the Canaanites were suffered for more than four hundred years; so long would God defer the destruction of the Amorites by Israel, because till then their iniquity would not have attained its height. And why would he defer the destruction of these miserable people till their iniquities should have attained their height? This, as we said in the beginning, is the subject upon which we are going to fix your attention. God exercised his patience long toward the most wicked people, having borne with the rebellion of ancestors, he bears with the rebellion of their posterity, and whole ages pass without visible punishment: but at length, collecting the rebellions of parents and children into one point of vengeance, he poureth out his indignation on whole nations that have abused his patience; and, as I advanced before, and think it necessary to repeat again, he proportioneth his vindictive visitations to the length of time that had been granted to avert them. *I will judge that nation whom thy descendants shall serve*, but it shall be *in the fourth generation*, *because*

because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

The remaining time, with which you condescend yet to favour me, I shall employ in considering,

I. The nature of this œconomy.
II. The goodness and justice which characterize it.
III. The terrors that accompany it.
IV. The relation which it bears to our own dismal circumstances.

Let us consider, I. The nature of this œconomy. Recollect an observation that hath been made by most of those who have laid down rules to assist us in reasoning justly; that is, that we are sometimes to consider a nation, in a moral light, as a person, consisting of a body, a soul, and a duration of life. All the people who compose this nation are considered as one body: the maxims which direct its conduct in peace or in war, in commerce or in religion, constitute what we call the spirit, or soul of this body. The ages of its continuance are considered as the duration of its life. This parallel might be easily enlarged.

Upon this principle, we attribute to those who compose a nation now, what, properly speaking, agrees only with those who formerly composed it. Thus we say, the same nation was delivered from bondage in Egypt in the reign of Pharaoh, which was delivered from slavery in Babylon in the reign of Cyrus. In the same sense, Jesus Christ tells the Jews of his time, *Moses gave you not that bread from heaven*, John vi. 32; not that the same persons, who had been delivered from Egypt, were delivered from Babylon; nor that the Jews, to whom Moses had given manna in the desert, were the same to whom Jesus Christ gave bread from heaven; but because the Jews, who lived under the reign of Cyrus, and those who lived in the time of Pharaoh, they who lived in the time of Moses, and they who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, were considered as different parts of that moral body, called the Jewish nation.

On this principle, (and this has a direct view to our subject) we attribute to this whole body, not only those physical, but even those moral actions, which belong only to one part of it. We ascribe the praise, or the blame of an action to a nation, though they who performed it have been dead many ages. We say that the Romans, who had courage to oppose even the shadow of tyranny under their consuls,

suls, had the meanness to adore tyrants under their emperors. And, what is still more remarkable, we consider that part of a nation which continues, responsible for the crimes of that which subsists no more.

A passage in the gospel of St. Luke will clearly illustrate our meaning. *Woe unto you: for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them*, chap. xi. 47; *and ye say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation*, Matt. xxiii. 30.

We will not inquire now what Zachariahs is here spoken of. Interpreters are not agreed. Some say, it is the same person who is spoken of in the second book of Chronicles, chap. xxiv. 20, 21. who was extraordinarily raised up to stem that torrent of corruption, with which the Jews were carried away after the death of the high priest Jehoida. He succeeded his father Jehoida in his zeal, and fell a victim for it, for he was stoned to death in the porch of the temple, by those whom he endeavoured to reform. Others say, it is a Zacharias, mentioned by the historian Josephus*, whose virtue rendered him formidable to those madmen, who are known by the name of *zealots;* they charged him unjustly with the most shocking crimes, and put him to death as if he had actually committed them. A third opinion is, that it is he, whom we call one of the lesser prophets. But, not to detain you on this subject, which perhaps may not be easily determined, we may observe in our Saviour's words the manner of considering a nation as a moral person, who is responsible at one time for crimes committed at another, who hath been borne with, but hath abused that forbearance, and, at length, is punished both for committing the crimes, and for abusing the forbearance that had been granted. *Verily*

* Bell. Jud. iv. 19.

I say unto you, upon you shall come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

The Amorites in my text must be considered, in like manner, as a moral person, whose life God had resolved, when he spoke to Abraham, to prolong four hundred years; who, during that four hundred years, would abuse his patience; and at last would be punished for all the crimes, which should be committed in that long period. *And that nation whom they shall serve will I judge. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* This is the nature of this œconomy of Providence. We shall see, in a second article, the perfections of God which shine in it, and, in particular, that goodness, and that justice, which eminently characterize all his actions.

II. It is extremely easy to distinguish the goodness of this œconomy, and, as we are under a necessity of abridging our subject, we may safely leave this article to your own meditation. To exercise patience four hundred years toward a people, who worshipped the most infamous creatures; a people who sacrificed human victims; a people abandoned to the most enormous crimes; to defer the extinction of such a people for four hundred years could only proceed from the goodness of that God, who *is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

It is more difficult to discover the justice of God in this œconomy. What! The Jews, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, could they be justly punished for murders committed so many ages before their birth? What! Could they be responsible for the blood of the prophets, in which their hands had never been imbrued? What! Could God demand an account of all this blood of them? How! The Canaanites of Joshua's time, ought they to be punished for all the abominations of four hundred years? What! Ought we to terrify you to day, not only with your own sins, but with all those who have been committed in your provinces from the moment of their first settlement?

I answer, If that part of a nation which subsists in one period hath no union of time with that which subsisted in another period, it may have an union of another kind, it may have

have even four different unions, any one of which is sufficient to justify Providence: there is an union of *interest;* an union of *approbation;* an union of *emulation;* and (if you will allow the expression) an union of *accumulation.* An union of *interest,* if it avail itself of the crimes of its predecessors: an union of *approbation,* if it applaud the shameful causes of its prosperity; an union of *emulation,* if it follows such examples as ought to be detested; an union of *accumulation,* if, instead of making amends for these faults, it reward the depravity of those who commit them. In all these cases, God inviolably maintains the laws of his justice, when he uniteth in one point of vengeance the crimes which a nation is committing now with those which were committed many ages before, and poureth out those judgments on the part that remains, which that had deserved who had lived many ages ago. Yes, if men peaceably enjoy the usurpations of their ancestors, they are usurpers, as their predecessors were, and the justice of God may make these responsible for the usurpations of those. Thus it was with the Jews, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ: Thus it was with the Amorites, who lived four hundred years after those of whom God spoke to Abraham: and thus we must expect it to be with us, for we also shall deserve the punishments due to our ancestors, if we have any one of the unions with them, which hath been mentioned. Your meditation will supply what is wanting to this article.

It sometimes falls out in this œconomy, that the innocent suffer while the guilty escape: But neither this, nor any other inconvenience, that may attend this œconomy, is to be compared with the advantages of it. The obligation of a citizen to submit to the decision of an ignorant, or a corrupt judge, is an inconvenience in society: however, this inconvenience ought not to free other men from submitting to decisions at law; because the benefits that society derives from a judicial mode of decision, will exceed, beyond all comparison, the evils that may attend a perversion of justice in a very few cases. Society would be in continual confusion, were the members of it allowed sometimes to resist the decisions of their lawful judges. Private disputes would never end; public quarrels would be eternal; and the administration of justice would be futile and useless.

Beside, Providence hath numberless ways of remedying the inconveniences of this just œconomy, and of indemnifying all those innocent persons, who may be involved in

punishments due to the guilty. If, when God sendeth fruitful seasons to a nation, to reward their good use of the fruits of the earth, an individual destitute of virtue, reap the benefit of those who are virtuous, an infinitely wise Providence can find ways to poison all his pleasures, and to prevent his enjoyment of the prosperity of the just. If an innocent person be involved in a national calamity, an infinitely wise Providence knows how to indemnify him for all he may sacrifice to that justice, which requires that a notoriously wicked nation should become a notorious example of God's abhorrence of wickedness.

Having established these principles, let us apply them to the words of Jesus Christ, which were just now quoted, and to the text.

The Jewish nation, considered in the just light of a moral person, was guilty of an innumerable multitude of the most atrocious crimes. It had not only not profited by the earnest exhortations of those extraordinary men, whom heaven had raised up to rectify its mistakes, and to reform its morals: but it had risen up against them as enemies of society, who came to trouble the peace of mankind. When they had the courage faithfully to reprove the excesses of its princes they were accused of opposing the regal authority itself; when they ventured to attack errors, that were in credit with the ministers of religion, they were taxed with resisting religion itself; and, under these pretences, they were frequently put to death. Witness the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, the apostle St. James, and Jesus Christ himself.

God had often exhorted that nation to repent, and had urged the most tender and the most terrible motives to repentance: one while he loaded it with benefits, another while he threatened it with punishments. Sometimes he supported the authority of his messages by national judgments; sermons were legible by lightning, and thunder procured attention, doctrines were re-iterated by pestilence and famine, and exhortations were re-echoed by banishment and war. All these means had been ineffectual: or if they had produced any alteration, it had been only an apparent or a momentary change, which had vanished with the violent means that produced it. The Jewish nation was always the same; always a stiff-necked nation; always inimical to truth, and infatuated with falshood; always averse to reproof, and thirst for the blood of its prophets. What the Jews were in the times of the prophets, that they were in the

times

times of Jesus Christ and his apostles; they were full as barbarous to Jesus Christ as to Zechariah the son of Barachiah.

A time must come in which divine justice ought to prevent the fatal consequences of a longer forbearance; a time in which the whole world must be convinced that God's toleration of sinners is no approbation of sin; a time when general vengeance must justify Providence by rendering to all the due rewards of their deeds. Such a time was at hand when Jesus Christ spoke to the Jews; and, foreseeing the miseries that would overwhelm Judea, he told them that God would require an account, not only of the blood of all the prophets, which they had spilt, but of all the murders that had been committed on earth from the death of Abel to the slaughter of Zechariah.

Thus it was with the Amorites; and thus it will be with your provinces, if you avail yourselves of the crimes of your predecessors, if you extenuate the guilt, if you imitate the practice, if you *fill up the measure of* their iniquities. Then divine justice, collecting into one point of vengeance all the crimes of the nation, will inflict punishments proportional to the time that was granted to avert them. Thus we have sufficiently proved the justice of this œconomy.

III. Let us remark the terrors that accompany this dispensation. But where can we find expressions sufficiently sad, or images sufficiently shocking and gloomy, to describe those terrible times. The soul of Moses dissolved in considering them; *by thy wrath we are troubled; thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance*, Psal. xc. 7, 8. Every thing that assuageth the anger of the Judge of the world is useless here. The exercise of prayer, that exercise, which sinners have sometimes used with success to the suspending of the anger of God, to the holding of his avenging arm, and to the disarming of him of his vindictive rod, that exercise hath lost all its efficacy and power; God *covereth himself with a cloud that prayer cannot pass through*, Lam. iii. 44. The intercession of venerable men, who have sometimes stood in the breach, and turned away his wrath, cannot be admitted now; *though Moses and Samuel stood before God, yet his mind could not be toward this people*, Jer. xv. 1. Those sanctuaries, which have been consecrated to divine worship, and which have so often afforded refuges

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in times of danger, have lost their noble privilege, and are themselves involved in the direful calamity; *The Lord casteth off his altar, abhorreth his sanctuary, giveth up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, and they make a noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast*, Lament. ii. 7. The cries of children, which have sometimes melted down the hearts of the most inflexible, those cries cannot now excite the mercy of God, the innocent creatures themselves fall victims to his displeasure; *the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city, they say to their mothers, where is corn and wine*, ver. 12. *The hands of pitiful women seethe their own children, they are their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people*, chap. iv. 10. The treasures of grace, which have been so often opened to sinners, and from which they have derived converting power, in order to free them from the executions of justice, these treasures are now quite exhausted; God saith, *I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon my vineyard*, Isa. v. 6. *Go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*, chap. vi. 9, 10. O God! thou *consuming fire!* Deut. iv. 24. O God, *to whom vengeance belongeth*, Psal. xciv. 1. how *fearful a thing is it to fall into thy hands!* Heb. x. 31. How dreadful are thy footsteps, when, in the cool fierceness of thine indignation, thou comest to fall upon a sinner! *The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zecharias: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.*

IV. To conclude. We have proved that there is a fatal period, in which God will unite the sins of a nation in one point of vengeance, and will proportion the punishments, which he useth to exterminate them, to the length of time that he had granted for preventing them. And from this principle, which will be the ground of our exhortations in the close of this discourse, I infer, that as there is a particular repentance imposed on every member of society, so there is a national repentance, which regards all who compose a nation. The repentance of an individual doth not consist in merely asking pardon for his sins, and in endeavouring to correct

correct the bad habits he hath formed; but it requires also that the sinner should go back to his first years, remember, as far as he can, the sins that defiled his youth, lament every period of his existence, which, having been signalized by some divine favour, was also signalized by some marks of ingratitude; it requireth him to say, under a sorrowful sense of having offended a kind and tender God, *I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*, Psal. li. 5. *O Lord, remember not the sins of my youth*, Psal. xxv. 7. *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? Wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth!* Job xiii. 25, 26. In like manner the repentance of a nation doth not consist in a bare attention to present disorders, and to the luxury that now cry to the judge of the world for vengeance: but it requireth us to go back to the times of our ancestors, and examine whether we be now enjoying the wages of their unrighteousness, and whether, while we flatter ourselves with the opinion that we have not committed their vices, we be not now relishing productions of them. Without this we shall be responsible for the very vices which they committed, though time hath almost blotted out the remembrance of them; and the justice of God threateneth to involve us in the same punishments: *The blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zecharias; verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.*

Dreadful thought! my brethren. A thought that may very justly disturb that shameful security, into which our nation is sunk. I tremble, when I think of some disorders, which my eyes have seen during the course of my ministry among you. I do not mean the sins of individuals, which would fill a long and very mortifying list: I mean public sins, committed in the face of the sun; maxims, received, in a manner, by church and state, and which loudly cry to heaven for vengeance against this republic. In these degenerate times, I have seen immorality and infidelity authorized by a connivance at scandalous books, which are intended to destroy the distinctions of vice and virtue, and to make the difference between just and unjust appear a mere chimera. In these degenerate days, I have seen the oppressed church cry in vain for succour for her children, while the reformation of the church was sacrificing to the

policy

policy of the state. In this degenerate age, I have seen solemn days insolently profaned by those, whom worldly decency alone ought to have engaged to observe them. In these days of depravity, I have seen hatred and discord lodge among us, and labour in the untoward work of reciprocal ruin. In these wretched times, I have seen the spirit of intolerance unchained with all its rage, and the very men, who incessantly exclaim against the persecutions that have affected themselves, turn persecutors of others: so that, at the close of a religious exercise, men, who ought to have remembered what they had heard, and to have applied it to themselves, have been known to exercise their ingenuity in finding heresy in the sermon, in communicating the same wicked industry to their families, and to their children, and, under pretence of religion, in preventing all the good effects that religious discourses might have produced. In this degenerate age . . . . . .

But this shameful list is already too long. Doth this nation repent of its past sins? Doth it lament the crimes of its ancestors? Alas! far from repenting of our past sins, far from lamenting the crimes of our ancestors, doth not the least attention perceive new and more shocking excesses? The wretched age, in which Providence hath placed us, doth it not seem to have taken that for its model, against which God displayed his vengeance, as we have been describing in this discourse? Were Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim destroyed by fire from heaven for sins unknown to us? And God knows, God only knows, what dreadful discoveries the formidable but pious vigilance of our magistrates may still make. O God, *Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto thee, although I am but dust and ashes. Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous among us? Peradventure forty? Peradventure thirty? Peradventure twenty? Peradventure ten?* Gen. xviii. 25, &c.

My brethren, God yet bears with you, but how long he will bear with you, who can tell? And do not deceive yourselves, his forbearance must produce, in the end, either your conversion or your destruction. The Lord grant it may produce your conversion, and *so iniquity shall not be your ruin.* Ezek. xviii. 30. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD WITH INDIVIDUALS.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11, 12.

Because sentence against *an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. For the sinner doth evil an hundred times, and* God *prolongeth his days*.*

THE wise man points out, in the words of the text, one general cause of the impenitence of mankind. The disposition, to which he attributes it, I own, seems shocking and almost incredible; but if we examine our *deceitful and desperately wicked hearts*, Jer. xvii, 9. we shall find, that this disposition, which at first sight, seems so shocking, is one of those with which we are too well acquainted. *The heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil.* Why? *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.*

This shameful, but too common, inclination, we will endeavour to expose, and to shew you that the long-suffering, which the mercy of God grants to sinners, may be abused either in the disposition of a devil, or in that of a beast, or in that of a philosopher, or in that of a man.

He, who devotes his health, his prosperity, and his youth, to offend God, and, while his punishment is deferred, to invent new ways of blaspheming him; he, who followeth

* We have followed the reading of the *French* Bible in this passage.

such a shameful course of life, abuseth the patience of God in the disposition of a *devil.*

He, who enervates and impairs his reason, either by excessive debauchery, or by worldly dissipations, by an effeminate luxury, or by an inactive stupidity, and pays no regard to the great end for which God permits him to live in this world, abuseth the patience of God in the disposition of a *beast.*

He, who from the long-suffering of God infers consequences against his providence, and against his hatred of sin, is in the disposition, of which my text speaks, as a *philosopher.*

He, who concludes because the patience of God hath continued to this day, that it will always continue, and makes such a hope a motive to persist in sin without repentance or remorse, abuseth the patience of God in the disposition of a *man.* As I shall point out these principles to you, I shall shew you the injustice and extravagance of them.

I. To devote health, prosperity, and youth, to offend God, and to invent new ways of blasphemsng him, while the punishment of him who leads such a shameful life is deferred, is to abuse the long-suffering of God like a *devil.*

The majesty of this place, the holiness of my ministry, and the delicacy of my hearers, forbid precision on this article, for there would be a shocking impropriety in exhibiting a well-drawn portrait of such a man. But if it is criminal to relate such excesses, what must it be to commit them? It is but too certain, however, that nature sometimes produceth such infernal creatures, who, with the bodies of men, have the sentiments of devils. Thanks be to God, the characters which belong to this article, must be taken from other countries, though not from ancient history.

I speak of those abominable men, to whom living and moving would be intolerable, where they to pass one day without insulting the author of their life and motion. The grand design of all their actions is to break down every boundary, that either modesty, probity, or even a corrupt and irregular conscience hath set to licentiousness. They bitterly lament the paucity of the ways of violating their Creator's laws, and they employ all the power of their wit, the play of their fancy, and the fire of their youth, to supply the want. Like that impious king, of whom the scripture speaks, Dan. v. 2. they carouse with the sacred vessels, and

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them they profanely abuse in their festivity: them, did I say? The most solemn truths, and the most venerable mysteries of religion, they take into their polluted mouths, and display their infidelity and impurity in ridiculing them. They hurry away a life which is become insipid to them, because they have exhausted all resources of blasphemy against God, and they hasten to hell to learn others of the infernal spirits, their patterns and their protectors.

Let us throw a veil, my brethren, over these abominations, and let us turn away our eyes from objects so shameful to human nature. But how comes it to pass, that rational creatures, having ideas of right and wrong, arrive at such a subversion of reason, and such a degree of corruption, as to be pleased with a course of life, which carries its pains and punishments with it?

Sometimes this phœnomenon must be attributed to a vicious education. We seldom pay a sufficient regard to the influence that education hath over the whole life. We often entertain false, and oftner still, inadequate notions of what is called *a good education*. We have given, it is generally thought, a good education to a youth, when we have taught him an art, or trained him up in a science; when we have instructed him how to arrange a few dry words in his head, or a few crude notions in his memory; and we are highly satisfied when we have intrusted the cultivation of his tender heart to a man of probity. We forget that the venom of sin impregnates the air he breathes, and communicates itself to him by all he sees, and by all he hears. If we would give young people a good education, we must forbid them all acquaintance with those who do not delight in decency and piety: we must never suffer them to hear debauchery and impiety spoken of without detestation: we must furnish them with precautions previous to their travels, in which, under pretence of acquainting themselves with the manners of foreigners, they too often adopt nothing but their vices: we must banish from our universities those shocking irregularities, and annihilate those dangerous privileges which make the means of education the very causes of corruption and ruin.

Sometimes these excesses are owing to the connivance, or the countenance of princes. We have never more reason to predict the destruction of a state than when the reins of government are committed to men of a certain character. It will require ages to heal the wounds of one impious reign.

An irreligious reign emboldens vice, and multiplies infamous places for the commission of it. In an irreligious reign scandalous books are published, and it becomes fashionable to question whether there be a God in heaven, or any real difference between virtue and vice on earth. In the space of an irreligious reign offices are held by unworthy persons, who either abolish, or suffer to languish, the laws that policy had provided against impiety. Histories, more recent than those of Tiberius and Nero, would too fully exemplify our observations, were not the majesty of princes, in some sort, respectable, even after they are no more.

Sometimes these excesses, which offer violence to nature, are caused by a gratification of those which are agreeable to the corruption of nature. Ordinary sins become insipid by habit, and sinners are forced, having arrived at some periods of corruption, to endeavour to satisfy their execrable propensities by the commission of those crimes, which once made them shudder with horror.

To all these reasons add the judgment of divine Providence; for *God giveth those up to uncleanness*, Rom. i. 24. who have made no use of the means of instruction and piety, which he had afforded them.

I repeat my thanksgivings to God, the protector of these states, that among our youth, (though, alas! so far from that piety which persons, dedicated to God by baptism, ought to possess) we have none of this character. Indeed had we such a monster among us, we should neither oppose him by private advice nor by public preaching: but we should think that the arm of the secular magistrate was a likelier mean of repulsing him than the decision of a casuist. Let none be offended at this. Our ministry is a ministry of compassion, I grant; and we are sent by a master who willeth not the death of a sinner: but if we thought that compassion obliged us on any occasions to implore your clemency, my lords, for some malefactors, whom your wise laws, and the safety of society, condemn to die, we would rather intercede for assassins and highway robbers, yea for those miserable wretches whose execrable avarice tempts them to import infected commodities, which expose our own and our children's lives to the plague; for these we would rather intercede, than for those whose dreadful examples are capable of infecting the minds of our children with infernal maxims, and of rendering these provinces like Sodom and Gommorrah, Admah and Zeboim, first by involving them in the guilt,

guilt, and then in the fiery punishment of those detestable cities.

Where the sword of the magistrate doth not punish, that of divine vengeance will: but as it would be difficult for imagination to conceive the greatness of the punishments that await such sinners, it is needless to adduce the reasons of them. Our first notions of God are vindictive to such, and as soon as we are convinced that there is a just God, the day appears in which, falling upon these unworthy men, he will address them in this thundering language: *Depart; depart* into the source of your pleasures; *depart into everlasting fire* with all your associates, Matt. xxv. 41. do for ever and ever what you have been doing in your life-time; having exhausted my patience, experience the power of my anger; and as you have had the dispositions of devils, suffer for ever the punishments *prepared for the devil and his angels.*

II. A man may be in the disposition, of which the wise man speaks in the text, through stupidity and indolence, and this second state confounds the man with the *beast.* There is nothing hyperbolical in this proposition. What makes the difference between a man and a beast? The distinguishing characters of each are these: the one is confined to a short duration, and to a narrow circle of present objects; the other hath received of his Creator the power of going beyond time, and of penetrating by his meditation into remote futurity, yea even into an endless eternity. The one is actuated only by sensual appetites; the other hath the faculty of rectifying his senses by the ideas of his mind. The one is carried away by the heat of his temperament; the other hath the power of cooling temperament with reflection. The one knows no argument nor motive but sensation; the other hath the power of making motives of sensation yield to the more noble and permanent motives of interest. To imitate the first kind of these creatures, is to live like a beast; to follow the second, is to live like a man.

Let us apply this general truth to the particular subject in hand, and let us justify what we have advanced, that there is nothing hyperbolical in this proposition. If there be a subject that merits the attention of an intelligent soul, it is the long-suffering of God: and if there be a case, in which an intelligent creature ought to use the faculty that his Creator hath given him, of going beyond the circle of present objects, of rectifying the actions of his senses by the ideas of his mind,

mind, and of correcting his temperament by reflection, it is certainly the case of that sinner with whom God hath borne so long.

Miserable man! ought he to say to himself, I have committed, not only those sins which ordinarily belong to the frailty and depravity of mankind, but those also which are a shame to human nature, and which suppose that he who is guilty of them hath carried his corruption to the highest pitch! O miserable man! I have committed not only one of the sins which the scripture saith, deprive those who commit them of *inheriting the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. but I have lived many years in the practice of such sins; in the impurity of effeminacy and adultery, in the possession of unjust gain, in the gloomy revolutions of implacable hatred! Miserable man! I have abused, not only the ordinary means of conversion, but also those extraordinary means, which God grants only to a few, and which he seems to have displayed on purpose to shew how far a God of love can carry his mercy!

Miserable man! I was not only engaged as a man and a professor of christianity to give an example of piety, but I was also engaged to do it as a minister, as a magistrate, as a parent; yet in spite of all my unworthiness, God hath borne with me, and hath preserved me in this world, not only while prosperity was universal, but while calamities were almost general, while the sword was glutting itself with blood, while the destroying angel was exterminating on every side, as if he intended to make the whole world one vast grave! All this time God hath been showering his blessings upon me! upon me the chief of sinners! me his declared enemy! blessings that he promised to bestow as privileges on his favourites only! *I dwelt in the secret place of the most High, I abode under the shadow of the Almighty*, Psal. xci. 1.

I ask, my brethren, whether, if there be a state in which an intelligent creature ought to meditate and reflect, it be not the state of this sinner? If I prove then, that there are men in this state, who neither think nor reflect, because they confine their attention to the circle of present objects, abandon themselves wholly to sensuality, and give themselves up entirely to their constitutional vices; shall I not have proved that there are men, who like beasts, are indifferent to *the riches of the forbearance and long-suffering of God?* Rom. ii. 4. But where shall we find such people?

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Shall we search for them in fabulous history, or look for them in ancient chronicles? Shall we quote the relations of those travellers, who seem to aim less at instructing us by publishing true accounts, than at astonishing us by reporting uncommon events? Alas! alas! my dear brethren, I fear I have been too confident, and had not sufficiently proportioned my strength to my courage, when I engaged at the beginning of this discourse to confront certain portraits with the countenances of some of my hearers . . . . . But no, the truth ought not to suffer through the frailty of him whose office it is to publish it.

Tell us then, what distinguisheth the man from the beast, in that worshipper of Mammon, who, having spent his life in amassing and hoarding up wealth, in taxing the widow, the orphan, and the ward, to satiate his avarice; having defrauded the state, deceived his correspondents, and betrayed his tenderest friends; having accumulated heaps upon heaps, and having only a few days respite, which Providence hath granted him for the repentance of his sins, and the restitution of his iniquitous gains; employs these last moments in offering incense to his idol, spends his last breath in enlarging his income, in lessening his expences, and in endeavouring to gratify that insatiable desire of getting which gnaws and devours him?

Tell us what distinguisheth the man from the beast, in that old debauchee, who thinks of nothing but voluptuousness; who to sensuality sacrificeth his time, his fortune, his reputation, his health, his soul, his salvation, along with all his pretensions to immortality; and who would willingly comprehend the whole of man in this definition, a being capable of wallowing in voluptuousness?

Tell us what distinguisheth the man from the beast, in that man, who, not being able to bear the remorse of his own conscience, nor the idea of the vanity of this world, to which he is wholly devoted: drowns his reason in wine, gives himself up to all the excesses of drunkenness, exposeth himself to the danger of committing some bloody murder, or of perishing by some tragical death, of which we have too many melancholy examples; not only unfits himself for repenting now, but even renders himself incapable of repenting at all? What is a penitent reconciliation to God? It includes, at least, reflection and thought, the laying down of principles and the deducing of consequences: but people of this kind, through their excessive intoxication, generally incapacitate

incapicitate themselves for inferring a consequence, or admitting a principle, and even for reflecting and thinking; as experience, experience superior to all our reasoning, hath many time shewn.

But is it necessary to reason in order to discover the injustice of this disposition? Do you really think God created you capable of reflection that you should never reflect? Do you indeed believe God gave you so many fine faculties that you should make no use of these faculties? In a word, can you seriously think God made you men in order to enable you to live like beasts?

III. I said, in the third place, that the disposition, of which the wise man speaks in the text, sometimes proceeds from a principle of grave folly. So I call the principle of some philosophers, who imagine they find in the delay of the punishment of sinners, an invincible argument against the existence of God, at least, against the infinity of his perfections.

We do not mean, by a philosopher, that superficial trifler, who, not having the least notion of right reasoning, takes the liberty sometimes of pretending to reason, and, with an air of superiority, which might impose on us were we to be imposed on by a tone, saith, *The learned maintain such an opinion: but I affirm the opposite opinion. Casuits advance such a maxim: but I lay down a very different maxim. Pastors hold such a system: but, for my part, I hold altogether another system.* And who is he who talks in this decisive tone, and who alone pretends to contradict all our ministers, and all our learned men; the whole church, and the whole school? It is sometimes a man, whose whole science consists in the casting up of a sum. Is is sometimes a man, who hath spent all his life in exercises, that have not the least relation to the subject which he so arrogantly decides; and who thinks, if I may be allowed to say so, that arguments are to be commanded as he commands a regiment of soldiers. In a word, they are men, for the most part, who know neither what a system, nor a maxim is. Let not such people imagine they are addressed as philosophers; for we cannot address them without repeating what hath been said in the preceding article, which is their proper place.

We mean, when we speak of men who despise the long-suffering of God as *philosophers*, people, who have taken as much

much pains to arrive at infidelity, as they ought to have taken to obtain the knowledge of the truth: who have studied as much to palliate error, as they ought to have studied to expose it: who have gone through as long a course of reading and meditation to deprave their hearts as they ought to have undertaken to preserve them from depravity. Among the sophisms, which they have adopted, that, which they have derived from the delay of the punishment of sinners, hath appeared the most tenable, and they have occupied it as their fort. Sophisms of this kind are not new, they have been repeated in all ages, and in every age there have been such as Celius, (this is the name of an ancient atheist) of whom a heathen poet saith, *Celius says that there are no Gods, and that heaven is an uninhabited place;* and the chief reasons he assigns are these; he continued happy, and he had the prospect of continuing so, while he denied the existence of God.

As the persons, to whom we address this article, profess to reason, let us reason with them. And you, my brethren, endeavour to attend a few moments to our arguments. One chief cause of our erroneous notions of the perfections of God is the considering of them separately, and not in their admirable assortment and beautiful harmony. When we meditate on the goodness of God, we consider his goodness alone and not in harmony with his justice. When we meditate on his justice, we consider it in an abstract view, and without any relation to his goodness. And in the same manner we consider his wisdom, his power, and his other attributes.

This restriction of meditation (I think I may venture to call it so) is a source of sophistry. If we consider supreme justice in this manner, it will seem as if it ought to exterminate every sinner: and, on the contrary, if we consider supreme goodness in this manner, it will seem as if it ought to spare every sinner; to succour all the afflicted; to prevent every degree of distress; and to gratify every wish of every creature capable of wishing. We might observe the same of power, and of wisdom, and of every other perfection of God. But what shocking consequences would follow such views of the divine attributes! As we should never be able to prove such a justice, or such a goodness, as we have imagined, we should be obliged to infer, that God is not a Being supremely good; that he is not a Being supremely just; and the same may be said of his other perfections.

Persons, who entertain such notions, not only sink the Supreme Being below the dignity of his own nature, but even below that of mankind. Were we to allow the reasoning of these people, we should increase their difficulties by removing them for the argument would end in downright atheism. Were we to allow the force of their objections, I say, we should increase their difficulties, and, instead of obtaining a solution of the difficulty which attends our notion of a divine attribute, we should obtain a proof that there is no God: for, could we prove that there is a being supremely good, in their abstract sense of goodness, we should thereby prove that there is no being supremely just; because supreme goodness, considered in their abstract manner, destroys supreme justice. The same may be said of all the other perfections of God, one perfection of the divine nature would destroy another, and to prove that God possessed one would be to prove that of the other his nature was quite destitute.

Now, if there be a subject, my brethren, in which people err by considering the perfections of God in a detached and abstract manner, it is this of which we are speaking; it is when people raise objections against the attributes of God from his forbearance with sinners. God seems to act contrary to some of his perfections in his forbearance. Why? Because the perfection, to which his conduct seems incongruous, is considered as if it were alone, and not as if it were in relation to another perfection: because, as I have already said, the divine attributes are considered abstractly and not in their beautiful assortment and admirable harmony.

I confine myself to this principle to refute the objections which some, who are improperly called philosophers, derive from the delay of the punishment of sinners, to oppose to the perfections of God. I do not, however, confine myself to this for want of other solid answers: for example, I might prove that the notion, which they form of those perfections, to which the delay of divine vengeance seems repugnant, is a false notion.

What are those perfections of God? They are, you answer, *truth*, which is interested in executing the threatenings denounced against sinners: *wisdom*, which is interested in supplying means of re-establishing order: and particularly *justice*, which is interested in punishing the guilty.

I reply, your idea of truth is opposite to truth: your idea

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of wisdom is opposite to wisdom: your idea of justice is opposite to justice.

Yes, the notion you entertain of *truth* is opposite to truth, and you resemble those *scoffers*, of whom the apostle speaks, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 4. What Jesus Christ hath said of St. John, *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* chap. xxi. 22. had occasioned a rumour concerning the near approach of the dissolution of the world: but there was no appearance of the dissolution of the world: thence the *scoffers*, of whom St. Peter speaks, concluded that God had not fulfilled his promise, and on this false supposition they said, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Apply this reflection to yourselves. The delay of the punishment of sinners, you say, is opposite to the truth of God: on the contrary, God hath declared he would not punish every sinner as soon as he had committed an act of sin. *The sinner doth evil an hundred times, and God prolongeth his days.*

The delay of the punishment of sinners, you say, is opposite to the *wisdom* of God: on the contrary, it is this delay which provides for the execution of that wise plan which God hath made for mankind, of placing them for some time in a state of probation in this world, and of regulating their future reward or punishment according to their use or abuse of such a dispensation.

The delay of the punishment of sinners, you say is repugnant to the *justice* of God. Quite the contrary. What do you call justice in God? What! Such an impetuous emotion as that which animates you against those who affront you, and whom you consider as enemies? An implacable madness, which enrageth you to such a degree that a sight of all the miseries into which you are going to involve them is not able to curb? Is this what you call justice?

But I suppress all these reflections, and return to my principle, (and this is not the first time we have been obliged to proportion the length of a discourse, not to the nature of the subject, but to the impatience of our hearers.) I return to my principle; the delay of the punishment of sinners will not seem incompatible with the justice of God unless you consider that perfection detached from another perfection, by which God in a most eminent manner displays his glory, I mean his mercy. An explication of the last clause of our text, *the sinner doth evil an hundred times, and* God *prolongeth*

longeth his days, will place the matter in a clear light: for the long-suffering of God with sinners flows from his mercy. St. Peter confirms this when he tells us, *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*, 2 Epist. iii. 9.

It is with the same view that Jesus Christ calls the whole time, during which God delayed the destruction of Jerusalem, *the time of the visitation* of that miserable city, Luke xix. 44. And for the same reason St. Paul calls the whole time, which God puts between the commission of sin and the destruction of sinners, *riches of forbearance, and long-suffering, that lead to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. And who could flatter himself with the hope of escaping *devouring fire, and everlasting burnings*, Isa. xxxiii. 14. were God to execute immediately his sentence against evil works, and to make punishment instantly follow the practice of sin?

What would have become of David, if divine mercy had not *prolonged his days* after he had fallen into the crimes of adultery and murder; or if justice had called him to give an account of his conduct, while his heart, burning with a criminal passion, was wishing only to gratify it; while he was sacrificing the honour of a wife, the life of a husband, along with his own body, which should have been a temple of the Holy Ghost, to the criminal passion that inflamed his soul? It was the long-suffering, the patience of God, that gave him time to recover himself, to get rid of his infatuation, to see the horror of his sin, and to say under a sense of it, *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy mercies blot out my transgressions, Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions. and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest*, Psal. li. 1—4.

What would have become of Manasseh, if God had called him to give an account of his administration while he was making the house of God the theatre of his dissoluteness and idolatry; while he was *planting groves, rearing up altars for the host of heaven, making his sons pass through the fire, doing more wickedly than the Amorites, making Judah to sin with his dunghill gods*, as the holy scripture calls them? 2 Kings xxi. 3, 6, 11. It was the long-suffering of God

God that bore with him, that engaged him to humble himself, to pray fervently to the God of his fathers, and to become an exemplary convert, after he had been an example of infidelity and impurity.

What would have become of St. Peter, if God had called him to give an account of himself, while, frightened and subverted at the sight of the judges and executioners of his Saviour, he was pronouncing those cowardly words, *I know not the man?* Matt. xxvi. 74. It was the long-suffering and patience of God that gave him an opportunity of seeing the merciful looks of Jesus Christ immediately after his denial of him, of fleeing from a place fatal to his innocence, of going out to weep bitterly, and of saying to Jesus Christ, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee: Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,* John xxi. 16, 17.

What would have become of St. Paul, if God had required an account of his administration, while he was *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,* Acts ix. 1. while he was ambitious of stifling the new-born church in her cradle, while he was soliciting letters from the high priest to pervert and to punish the disciples of Christ? It was the long-suffering of God, that gave him an opportunity of saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* ver. 6. It was the patience of God, which gave him an opportunity of making that honest confession, *I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: But I obtained mercy,* 1 Tim. i. 13.

IV. But why should we go out of this assembly, (and here we enter into the last article, and shall endeavour to prevent your abuse of the patience of God in the dispositions of *men*) why should we go out of this assembly, to search after proofs of divine mercy in a delay of punishment? What would have become of you, my dear hearers, if vengeance had immediately followed sin; if God had not *prolonged the days of sinners;* if *sentence against evil works* had been *executed speedily?*

What would have become of some of you, if God had required of you an account of your conduct, while you were sacrificing the rights of widows and orphans to the *honour of the persons of the mighty,* Lev. xix. 15. while you were practising perjury and accepting bribes? It is the long-suffering of God that *prolongs your days,* that you may make a restitution of your unrighteous gain, plead for the orphan

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and the widow, and attend in future decisions only to the nature of the cause before you.

What would have become of some of you, if God had called you to give an account of your conduct, while the fear of persecution, or, what is infinitely more criminal still, while the love of ease, prevailed over you to renounce a religion which you respected in your hearts while you denied it with your mouths? It is the patience of God, which hath afforded you time to learn the greatness of a sin, the guilt of which a whole life of repentance is not sufficient to expiate: it is the patience of God, which hath *prolonged your days*, that you might confess that Jesus whom you have betrayed, and profess that gospel which you have denied.

Let us not multiply particular examples, let us comprise this whole assembly in one class. There is not one of our hearers, no, not one, who is in this church to-day, there is not one who hath been engaged in the devotional exercises of this day, who would not have been in hell with the devil and his angels, if vengeance had immediately followed sin; if God had exercised no patience toward sinners; if *sentence against evil works* had been *executed speedily*. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed!* Lam. iii. 22. The delay of punishment is a demonstration of his mercy; it doth not prove that he is not just, but it doth prove that he is good.

I could wish, my brethren, that all those, who ought to interest themselves in this article, would render it needless for me to enter into particulars, by recollecting the history of their own lives, and by remembering the circumstances to which I refer. One man ought to say to himself; In my childhood, an upright father, a pious mother, and several worthy tutors did all that lay in their power to form me virtuous. In my youth, a tender and generous friend, who was more concerned for my happiness, and more ambitious of my excelling, than I myself, availed himself of all the power of insinuation that nature had given to incline my heart to piety and to the fear of God, and to attach me to religion by *bands of love*. On a certain occasion, Providence put into my hands a religious book, the reading of which discovered to me the turpitude of my conduct. At another time, one of those clear, affecting, thundering sermons, that alarm sleepy souls, forced from me a promise of repentance and reformation. One day, I saw the administration of the Lord's supper, which, awaking my attention to the grand sacrifice that

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divine justice required for the sins of mankind, affected me in a manner so powerful and moving, that I thought myself obliged in gratitude to dedicate my whole life to him, who in the tenderest compassion had given himself for me. Another time, an extremely painful illness shewed me the absurdity of my course of life; filled me with a keenness of remorse, that seemed an anticipation of hell; put me on beseeching God to grant me a few years more of his patience; and brought me to a solemn adjuration that I would employ the remaining part of my life in repairing the past. All these have been fruitless; all these means have been useless; all these promises have been false; and yet I may have access to a throne of grace. What love! What mercy!

This long suffering of God with impenitent sinners will be one of the most terrible subjects they can think of when the avenging moment comes; when the fatal hour arrives in which the voice of divine justice shall summon a miserable wretch to appear, when it shall bind him to a death-bed, and suspend him over the abyss of hell.

But to a poor sinner, who is awaking from his sin, who, having consumed the greatest part of his life in sin, would repair it by sacrificing the world and all its glory, were such a sacrifice in his power: to a poor sinner, who, having been for some time afraid of an exclusion from the mercy of God, revolves these distressing thoughts in his mind, Perhaps *the days of my visitation* may be at an end; henceforth perhaps my sorrows may be superfluous, and my tears inadmissable: to such a sinner, what an object, what a comfortable object, is the treasure of *the forbearance and long-suffering of God that leadeth to repentance.* My God, saith such a sinner, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies!* Gen. xxxii. 10. My God, I am tempted to think that to doubt of my interest in thy favour is the rendering of a proper homage to thy mercy, and my unbelief would arise from my veneration for thy majesty! But let me not think so; I will not doubt of thy mercy, my God, since thou hast condescended to assure me of it in such a tender manner! I will lose myself in that ocean of love, which thou, O God infinitely good! still discoverest to me, I will persuade myself thou dost not despise the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, and this persuasion I will oppose to an alarmed conscience, to a fear of hell that anticipates the misery of the state, and to all those formidable executioners of condemned men, whom I behold ready to seize their prey!

My

My brethren, *the riches of the goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering of God*, are yet open to you: they are open, my dear brethren, to this church, how ungrateful soever we have been to the goodness of God; how much insensibility soever we have shewn to the invitations of grace; they are open to the greatest sinners, nor is there one of my hearers who may not be admitted to these inexhaustible treasures of goodness and mercy.

But do you still *despise the riches of the long-suffering of God?* What! because *a space to repent* is given, Rev. ii. 21. will you continue in impenitence? Ah! were Jesus Christ in the flesh, were he walking in your streets, were he now in this pulpit preaching to you, would he not preach to you all bathed in sorrows and tears? He would weep over you as he once wept over Jerusalem, and he would say to this province, to this town, to this church, to each person in this assembly, yea to that wicked hearer, who affects not to be concerned in this sermon, O that *thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!* Luke xix. 42. What am I saying! he *would* say thus! He *doth* say thus, my dear brethren, and still interests himself in your salvation in the tenderest and most vehement manner. Sitting at the right hand of his Father, he holds back that avenging arm which is ready to fell us to the earth at a stroke; in our behalf he interposeth his sufferings and his death, his intercession and his cross; and from the top of that glory to which he is elevated he looks down and saith to this republic, to this church, to all this assembly, and to every sinner in it: O that *thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!*

My brethren, the patience of God, which yet endures, will not always endure. The *year*, which the master of the vineyard grants, at the intercession of *the dresser*, to try whether a barren fig-tree can be made fruitful, will expire, and then it must be *cut down*, Luke xiii. 6. Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren, the long-suffering of God must produce in the end either your conversion or your destruction. O may it prevent your destruction by producing your conversion! The Lord grant you this favour! To him, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

GOD THE ONLY OBJECT OF FEAR.

PART I.

JEREMIAH X. 7.

Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain.

THE Prophet aims, in the words of the text, to inspire us with *fear*, and the best way to undertand his meaning is to affix distinct ideas to the term. *To fear God* is an equivocal phrase in all languages; it is generally used in three senses in the holy scriptures.

1. *Fear* sometimes signifies terror; a disposition, that makes the soul consider itself only as sinful, and God chiefly as a Being who hateth and avengeth sin. There are various degrees of this fear, and it deserves either praise, or blame, according to the different degree to which it is carried.

A man, whose heart is so void of the knowledge of the perfections of God, that he cannot rise above the little idols which worldlings adore; whose notions are so gross, that he cannot adhere to the purity of religion for purity's sake; whose taste is so vitiated that he hath no relish for the delightful union of a faithful soul with its God; such a man deserves to be praised, when he endeavoureth to restrain his sensuality by the idea of an avenging God. The apostles urged this motive with success, *knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men*, 2 Cor. v. 11. *Of some have compassion*, saith St. Jude to the ministers of the

gospel, *making a difference*; *and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire*, ver. 22, 23. Such a disposition is, without doubt, very imperfect, and were a man to expect salvation in this way, he would be in imminent danger of feeling those miseries, of which he is afraid. No casuists, except such as have been educated in an infernal school, will venture to affirm, that *to fear God* in this sense, without loving him, is sufficient for salvation. Nevertheless this disposition is allowable in the beginning of a work of conversion, it is never altogether useless to a regenerate man, and it is of singular use to him in some violent temptations, with which the enemy of his salvation assaults him. When a tide of depravity threatens, in spite of yourselves, to carry you away, recollect some of the titles of God; the scripture calls him *the mighty and the terrible God*; *the furious Lord*; *a consuming fire*, Neh. ix. 32. Nahum i. 2. Heb. xii. 29. Remember the terrors, that your own consciences felt, when they first awoke from the enchantment of sin, and when they beheld, for the first time, vice in its own colours. Meditate on that dreadful abode, in which criminals suffer everlasting pains for momentary pleasures. *The fear of God*, taken in this first sense, is a laudable disposition.

But it ceaseth to be laudable, it becomes detestables, when it goeth so far as to deprive a sinner of a sight of all the gracious remedies, which God hath reserved for sinners, *I heard thy voice, and I was afraid, and I hid myself*, said the first man, after his fall: but it was *because he was naked*, Gen. iii. 10. it was because he had lost the glory of his primitive innocence, and must be obliged to prostrate himself before his God, to seek from his infinite mercy the proper remedies for his maladies, to pray to him, in whose *image* he had been first formed, Gen. i. 26. to *renew him after the image of him that created him*, Col. iii. 10. and to ask him for habits, that the *shame of his nakedness might not appear*, Rev. iii. 18. Despair should not dwell in the church, hell should be its only abode. It should be left to *the devils to believe and tremble*, James ii. 19. Time is an œconomy of hope, and only those, whom the day of wrath overwhelmeth with horrible judgments, have reason to cry *to the mountains and rocks*, *Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. Too great a degree of *fear*, then, in this first sense of fear, is a detestable disposition.

Fear

Fear is no less odious, when it giveth us tragical descriptions of the rights of God, and of his designs on his creatures: when it maketh a tyrant of him, whom the text calleth, *the king of nations;* of him, who is elsewhere described as having *on his thigh* the stately title of KING OF KINGS, Rev. xix. 16. of him, whose dominion is described as constituting the felicity of his subjects, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice,* Psal. xcvii. 1. Far be such descriptions of God from us! They represent the Deity as a merciless usurer, who requireth an account of talents, which we have not received; who requireth angelical knowledge of a human intelligence, or philosophical penetration of an uninstructed peasant. Far from us be those systems, which pretend to prove, that God will judge the heathens by the same laws by which he will judge the Jews, and that he will judge those, who lived under the law, as if they had lived under the gospel! Away with that fear of God, which is so injurious to his majesty, and so unworthy of that throne, which is founded on equity! What encouragement could I have to endeavour to know what God hath been pleased to reveal to mankind, were I pre-possessed with an opinion, that, after I had implored, with all the powers of my soul, the help of God to guide me in seeking the truth; after I had laid aside the prejudices that disguise it; after I had suspended, as far as I could, the passions that deprave my understanding; even after I had determined to sacrifice my rest, my fortune, my dignity, my life, to follow it; I might fall into capital errors which would plunge me into everlasting woe? No, no, we *have not so learned Christ,* Eph. iv. 20. None but a refractory servant *fears* God in this manner. It is only the refractory servant, who, to exculpate himself for neglecting what was in his power, pretends to have thought that God would require more than was in his power: *Lord,* saith he, *I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed,* Matt. xxv. 24. *I knew!* And where didst thou learn this? What infernal body of divinity hast thou studied? What demon was thy tutor? Ah! Thou art *a wicked servant,* ver. 26. and, at the same time, *a slothful servant; slothful,* not to form the just and noble resolution of improving the talent I committed to thee; *wicked,* to invent such an odious reason, and to represent me in such dismal colours. *Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then I should have received mine own with usury,* ver. 27.

Thou oughtest to have improved that ray of light, with which I had enlightened thee, and not to have forged an ideal God, who would require that with which he had not intrusted thee. Thou oughtest to have read the books, which my providence put into thy hands, and not to have imagined I would condemn thee for not having read those which were concealed from thee. Thou oughtest to have consulted those ministers, whom I had set in my church, and not to have feared I would condemn thee for not having sitten in conference with angels and seraphims, with whom thou hadst no intercourse. Thou hadst but one talent: thou oughtest to have improved that one talent, and not to have neglected it lest I should require four of thee. *Thou wicked servant! Thou slothful servant! Take the talent from him. Give it unto him who hath ten talents,* ver. 28.

These are the different ideas, which we ought to form, of that disposition of mind which is called *fear* in this first sense. *To fear God* in this sense is to have the soul filled with horror at the sight of his judgments.

2. *To fear God* is a phrase still more equivocal, and it is put for that disposition of mind, which inclines us to render him all the worship he requires, to submit to all the laws he imposeth, to conceive all the emotions of admiration, devotedness, and love, which the eminence of his perfections demand. This is the usual meaning of the phrase. By this Jonah described himself, even while he was acting contrary to it, *I am an Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven*, chap. i. 9. In this sense the phrase is to be understood when we are told, *the fear of the Lord prolongeth days, is a fountain of life, and preserveth from the snares of death*, Prov. x. 27. and xiv. 27. And it is to be taken in the same sense where *the fear of the Lord* is said to be *the beginning of wisdom*, Psal. cxi. 10. The fear of the Lord in all these passages includes all the duties of religion. The last quoted passage is quite mistaken, when the *fear* spoken of is taken for terror: and a conclusion is drawn from false premises when it is inferred from this passage that fear is not sufficient for salvation. This false reasoning, however, may be found in some systems of morality. Terror, say they, may, indeed, make a part of a course of wisdom, but it is only the beginning of it, as it is said, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; but, neither does *fear* signify terror in this passage, nor does *the beginning* mean a priority of time; it means the principal point.

The

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; that is, the principal point; that without which no man is truly wise, that is, obedience to the laws of religion, agreeably to the saying of the wise man, *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man,* Eccles. xii. 13.

It seems needless to remark what idea we ought to form of this fear: for it is plain, the more a soul is filled with it, the nearer it approacheth to perfection. It seems equally unnecessary to prove that terror is a very different disposition from this fear: for on the contrary, the most effectual mean of not fearing God in the first sense is to fear him in the last. *Fear not,* said Moses formerly, *for God is come to prove you, that his fear may be before your faces,* Exod. xx. 20. *Fear not, that ye may fear;* this is only a seeming contradiction: The only way to prevent *fear,* that is, horror, on account of the judgments of God, is to have *his fear before your eyes,* that is, such a love, and such a deference for him, as religion requires. Agreeably to this, it is elsewhere said, *perfect love,* (and perfect love in this passage, is nothing but the *fear* of which I am speaking) *perfect love casteth out fear;* that is, a horror on account of God's judgments: for the more love we have for him, the stronger assurance shall we enjoy, that his judgments have nothing in them dangerous to us.

3. But beside these two notions of fear, there is a third, which is more nearly allied to our text, a notion, that is neither so general as the last, nor so particular as the first. Fear, in this third sense, is a disposition which considers him who is the object of it as alone possessing all that can contribute to our happiness or misery. Distinguish here a particular from a general happiness. Every being around us, by a wise disposal of Providence, hath some degree of power to favour, or to hinder, a particular happiness. Every thing that can increase, or abate, the motion of our bodies, may contribute to the advancement, or to the dimunition, of the particular happiness of our bodies. Every thing that can elucidate, or obscure, the ideas of our minds, may contribute to the particular happiness or misery of our minds. Every thing that can procure to our souls either a sensation of pleasure, or a sensation of pain, may contribute to the particular happiness or misery of our souls. But it is neither a particular happiness, nor a particular misery, that we mean to treat of now: we mean a general happiness. It often happens, that all things being considered, a particular happiness,

piness, considered in the whole of our felicity, is a general misery: and on the contrary, it often happens, that, all things being considered, a particular misery, in the whole of our felicity, is a general happiness. It was a particular misfortune in the life of a man to be forced to bear the amputation of a mortified arm: but weighing the whole felicity of the life of the man, this particular misfortune became a good, because had he not consented to the amputation of the mortified limb, the mortification would have been fatal to his life, and would have deprived him of all felicity here. It was a particular calamity, that a believer should be called to suffer martyrdom: but in the whole felicity of that believer, martyrdom was a happiness, yea an inestimable happiness: by suffering the pain of a few moments, he hath escaped those eternal torments which would have attended his apostacy: the bearing of a *light affliction, which was but for a moment*, hath *wrought out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Let us sum up these reflections. To consider a being as capable of rendering us happy or miserable, in the general sense that we have given of the words happiness and misery, is *to fear* that Being, in the third sense which we have given to the term *fear*. This is the sense of the word *fear*, in the text, and in many other passages of the holy scriptures. Thus Isaiah useth it, *Say ye not a confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy: neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread*, chap. viii. 12, 13. So again *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass?* chap. li. 12. And again in these well-known words of our Saviour, *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matt. x. 28. *To kill the body* is to cause a particular evil; and *to fear them which kill the body* is to regard the death of the body as a general evil, determining the whole of our felicity. *To fear him which is able to destroy the soul*, is to consider the loss of the soul as the general evil, and *him who is able to destroy the soul* as alone able to determine the whole of our felicity or misery. In this sense we understand the text, and this sense seems most agreeable to the scope of the place.

The

The prophet was endeavouring to abase false gods in the eyes of his countrymen, while the true God was suffering their worshippers to carry his people into captivity. He was aiming to excite the Jews to worship the God of heaven and earth, and to despise idols even amidst the trophies and the triumphs of idolaters. He was trying to convince them fully that idols could procure neither happiness nor misery to mankind; and that, if their worshippers should inflict any punishments on the captives, they would be only particular evils permitted by the providence of God: *Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven because the heathen are dismayed at them. One cutteth a tree out of the forest with the axe* to make idols; another *decks them with silver and with gold, and fastens them with nails and with hammers that they move not.* They *are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not. They must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good*, ver. 2, &c. Remark here the double motive of not *fearing* them: on the one hand *they cannot do evil;* on the other, *neither is it in them to do good.* This justifies the idea, that we give you of fear, by representing it as that disposition, which considers its object as having our happiness and our misery in its power, Instead of fearing they should destroy you, announce you their destruction, and *say unto them*, in the language of the Babylonians who worship them*, *the Gods that have not made the heaven, and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens*, ver. 11. Having thus shewn that heathen gods could not be the object of that fear, which considereth a being as able to procure happiness and misery: the prophet represents the God of Israel as alone worthy of such an homage, *He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Molten images are falshood and vanity. The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance; the Lord of hosts is his name*, ver. 12, &c. The prophet, his own mind being

* These words are in the Chaldean language in the original.

being filled with those ideas, supposes every other mind filled with them too; and in an ecstacy exclaims, *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain?*

Fear, then, taken in this third sense, is an homage that cannot be paid to a creature without falling into idolatry. To regard a being, as capable of determining the happiness, or misery, of an immortal soul, is to pay the honours of adoration to him. As it can be said of none but God, *it is my happiness to draw near to him*, Psal. lxxiii. 28. so of him alone can it be truly said, *it is my misery to depart from him.* Moreover, this homage belongeth to him in a complete and eminent manner. He possesseth all without restriction that can contribute to our felicity, or to our misery. Three ideas, under which we are going to consider God, will prove what we have affirmed.

I. God is a Being, whose will is self-efficient.

II. God is the only Being, who can act immediately on spiritual souls.

III. God is the only Being, who can make all creatures concur with his designs. From these three notions of God follows this consequence, *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?*

I. God is a Being, whose will is self-efficient. We call that will self-efficient, which infallibly produceth its effect. By this efficiency of will we distinguish God from every other being, either real, or possible. No one but God hath a self-efficient will. There is no one but God of whom the argument from the will to the act is demonstrative. Of none but God can we reason in this manner: he willeth, therefore he doth. Every intelligent being hath some degree of efficiency in his will: my will hath an efficiency on my arm; I will to move my arm, my arm instantly moves. But there is as great a difference between the efficiency of the will of a creature, and the efficiency of the will of the Creator, as there is between a finite and an infinite being. The will of a created intelligence, properly speaking, is not self-efficient, for it hath only a borrowed efficiency. When he, from whom it is derived, restrains it, this created intelligence will have only a vain, weak, inefficient will. I have to-day a will efficient to move my arm: but if that Being, from whom I derive this will, should contract, or relax the fibres of

of this arm, my will to move it would become vain, weak, and inefficient. I have a will efficient on the whole mass of this body, to which it hath pleased the Creator to unite my immortal soul: but were God to dissolve the bond, by which he hath united these two parts of me together, all that I might then will in regard to this body would be vain, weak, and destitute of any effect. When the intelligence, who united my soul to my body, shall have once pronounced the word *return*, Psal. xc. 3. that portion of matter to which my soul was united will be as free from the power of my will as the matter that constitutes the body of the sun, or as that which constitutes bodies, to which neither my senses, nor my imagination can attain. All this comes to pass, because the efficiency of a creature is a borrowed efficiency, whereas that of the Creator is self-efficient and underived.

Further, the efficiency of a creature's will is finite. My will is efficient in regard to the portion of matter to which I am united; but how contracted is my empire! how limited is my sovereignty! It extends no farther than the mass of my body extends; and the mass of my body is only a few inches broad, and a few cubits high. What if those mortals, who are called kings, monarchs, emperors, could by foreign aid extend the efficiency of their wills to the most distant places; what if they were able to extend it to the extremities of this planet, which we inhabit; how little a way, after all, is it to the extremities of this planet? What if, by the power of sulphur and saltpetre, these men extend the efficiency of their wills to a little height in the air; how low, after all, is that height? Were a sovereign to unite every degree of power, that he could procure, to extend his efficiency to the nearest planet, all his efforts would be useless. The efficiency of a creature's will is finite, as well as borrowed: that of the Creator is independent and universal; it extends to the most remote beings, as well as to those that surround us, it extends alike to all actual and to all possible beings. My brethren, are you stricken with this idea? Do you perceive its relation to our subject? *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?*

Our low and groveling minds, low and groveling as they are, have yet some notion of the grand and the marvellous; and nothing can impede, nothing can limit, nothing can equal our notion of it: when we give it scope it presently gets beyond every thing we see, and every thing that exists. Reality is not sufficient, fancy must be indulged; real

existences are too indigent, possible beings must be imagined; and we presently quit the real to range through the ideal world. Hence come poetical fictions and fabulous narrations; and hence marvellous adventures, and romantic enchantments. A man is, assuredly, an object of great pity, when he pleaseth himself with such fantastic notions. But, the principle, that occasioned these fictions, ought to render the mind of man respectable: it is the very principle, which we have mentioned. It is because the idea, that the mind of man hath of the grand and the marvellous, finds nothing to impede, nothing to limit, nothing to equal it. The most able architect cannot fully gratify this idea, although he employ his genius, his materials, and his artists, to erect a superb and regular edifice in a few years. All this is far below the notion we have of the grand and the marvellous. Our mind imagines an enchanter, who, uniting in an instant all the secrets of art, and all the wonders of nature, by a single word of his mouth, or by a single act of his will, produceth a house, a palace, or a city. The most able mechanic cannot fully gratify this idea, although with a marvellous industry he build a vessel, which, resisting wind and waves, passeth from the east to the west, and discovereth new worlds, which nature seemed to have forbidden us to approach, by the immense spaces it had placed between us. Our mind fancies an enchantment, which giving to a body naturally ponderous the levity of air, the activity of fire, the agility of flame, or of ethereal matter, passeth the most immeasurable spaces with a rapidity swifter than that of lightning. It is God, it is God alone, my brethren, who is the original of these ideas. God only possesseth that which gratifies and absorbs our idea of the grand and the marvellous. The extravagance of fable does not lie in imagining these things; but in the misapplication of them. Must an edifice be formed by a single act of the will? In God we find the reality of this idea. He forms, not only a palace, a city, or a kingdom: but a whole world by a single act of his will; because his will is always efficient, and always produceth its effect. *God said, Let there be light, and there was light,* Gen. i. 3. *He spake and it was done: he commanded and it stood fast,* Psal. xxxiii. 9. Must the immense distances of the world be passed in an instant? In God we find the reality of this idea. What am I saying? we find more than this in God. He doth not pass through the spaces that separate the heavens from the earth, he fills them with the

the immensity of his essence. *Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!* 1 Kings viii. 27. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-stool: where is the house that ye build unto me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, saith the Lord,* Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

Were it necessary to prove that this idea is not a freak of our fancy, but that it ariseth from an original which really exists: I would divide, the better to prove my proposition, my opponents into two classes. The first should consist of those, who already admit the existence of a perfect Being: To them I could easily prove that efficiency of will is a perfection, and that we cannot conceive a Being perfect, who doth not possess this perfection. It is essential to the perfection of a Being, that we should be able to say of him, *Who hath resisted his will?* Rom. ix. 19. Could any other being resist his will, that being would be free from his dominion: and would subsist, not only independently on him, but even in spite of him: and then we could conceive a being more perfect than him, that is, a being from whose dominion nothing could free itself.

In the second class I would place those who deny the existence of a Supreme Being; and to them I would prove that the existence of beings, who have a derived efficiency of will, proves the existence of a Being whose will is self-efficient. Whence have finite beings derived that limited efficiency, which they possess, if not from a self-efficient Being, who hath distributed portions of efficiency among subordinate beings?

But it is less needful to prove that there is a Being who hath such a perfection; than it is to prove, that he who possesseth it merits, and alone merits, such a fear as we have described: that he deserves, and that he alone deserves to be considered as having our felicity, and our misery, in his power. *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? to thee doth it not appertain?* And who would not consider thee as the *only* object of this fear? To whom beside doth it appertain? The efficiency of a creature's will proceeds from thee, and as it proceeds from thee alone, by thee alone does it subsist: one act of thy will gave it existence, and one act of thy will can take that existence away! The most formidable creatures are only terrible through the exercise of a small portion of efficiency derived from thee;

thou art the source, the soul, of all! Pronounce the sentence of my misery, and I shall be miserable: pronounce that of my felicity, and I shall be happy: nor shall any thing be able to disconcert a happiness, that is maintained by an efficient will, which is superior to all opposition: before which all is nothing, or rather, which is itself all in all, because its efficiency communicates efficiency to all! *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? Doth* not fear *appertain to thee* alone?

Perhaps the proving of a self-efficient will may be more than is necessary to the exhibiting of an object of human fear. Must such a grand spring move to destroy such a contemptible creature as man: He is only a vapour, a particle of air is sufficient to dissipate it: he is only a flower, a blast of wind is sufficient to make it fade. This is undeniable in regard to the material and visible man, in which we too often place all our glory. It is not only, then, to the infinite God, it is not only to him whose will is self-efficient, that man owes the homage of fear: it may be said that he owes it, in a sense, to all those creatures, to which Providence hath given a presidency over his happiness or his misery. He ought not only to say, *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations? for to thee doth it appertain!* But he ought also to say, Who would not fear thee, O particle of air? Who would not fear thee, O blast of wind? Who would not fear thee, *O crushing of a moth?* Job iv. 19. Because there needs only a particle of air, there needs only a puff of wind, there needs only the *crushing of a moth*, to subvert his happiness, and to destroy his life. But you would entertain very different notions of human happiness and misery, were you to consider man in a nobler light; and to attend to our second notion of God, as an object of fear.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

GOD THE ONLY OBJECT OF FEAR.

PART II.

JEREMIAH X. 7.

Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain.

II. GOD is the only Being who hath a supreme dominion over the operations of a spiritual and immortal soul. The discussion of this article would lead us into observations too abstract for this place; and therefore we make it a law to abridge our reflections. We must beg leave to remark, however, that we ought to think so highly of the nature of man as to admit this principle: God alone is able to exercise an absolute dominion over a spiritual and immortal soul. From this principle we conclude, that God alone hath the happiness and misery of man in his power. God alone merits the supreme homage of fear. God alone, not only in opposition to all the imaginary gods of paganism, but also in opposition to every being that really exists, is worthy of this part of the adoration of a spiritual and immortal creature. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?*

Weigh the emphatical words, which we just now quoted, *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* Who art thou, *immaterial spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? Who art thou, *immortal spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?

Who

Who art thou, *immaterial spirit*, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? Man hath no immediate power over a spirit; he can affect it only by means of body. It is only by the body that a tyrant can cause a little anguish in the soul. It is only by the body as a mean that he can flatter some of the propensities of the soul, and propose himself to it as an object of its hope and fear. But, beside that this power is infinitely small while the soul is subject to it; beside that the soul is capable of a thousand pleasures and a thousand pains, during its union to the body, which man cannot excite; beside these advantages, it is beyond a doubt, that this power of a tyrant can endure no longer than the union of the soul to the body doth, by the means of which the tyrant affects it. If a tyrant exercise his power to a certain degree, he loseth it. When he has carried to a certain degree that violent motion, which he produceth in the body in order to afflict the soul, which is united to it, he breaks the bond that unites the soul to the body, and frees his captive by overloading him with chains. The union being dissolved, the soul is free; it no longer depends on the tyrant, because he communicates with it only by means of body. After the destruction of the organs of the body, the soul is superior to every effort of a despot's rage. Death removes the soul beyond the reach of the most powerful monarch. After death, the soul becomes invisible, and a tyrant's eye searcheth for it in vain: it ceaseth to be tangible, his chains and his fetters can hold it no more: it is no more divisible, his gibbets and his racks, his pincers and his wheels, can rend it no more: none of his fires can burn it, for it is not combustible: nor can any of his dungeons confine it, for it is immaterial.

Would to God, my brethren, we were well acquainted with our real grandeur, and, perceiving our own excellence, were above trembling at those contemptible worms of the earth, who fancy they know how to terrify us, only because they have acquired the audacity of addressing us with insolence and pride. There is no extravagance, there is not even a shadow of extravagance, in what we have advanced on the grandeur of an immaterial spirit. We have not said enough. It is not enough to say that a soul can neither be disordered by chains, nor racks, nor gibbets, nor pincers, nor fires; it defies the united power of universal nature. Yea, were all the waters that hang in the clouds, and that roll in the sea, were every drop collected into one prodigious deluge to overwhelm it, it would not be drowned. Were mountains the

most

most huge, were masses the most enormous, were all matter, to compose, if I may speak so, one vast ponderous weight to fall on and to crush it, it would not be bruised, yea, it would not be moved. Were all the cedars of Lebanon, with all the brimstone of Asphaltites, and with every other inflammable matter, kindled in one blaze to consume it, it would not be burnt. Yea, when *the heavens pass away with a great noise, when the constellations of heaven fall,* when *the elements melt with fervent heat,* when *the earth, and all the works that are therein, are burnt up,* 2 Pet. iii. 10. when *all these things are dissolved,* thou, human soul! shalt surmount all these vicissitudes and rise above all their ruins! *Who art thou?* Immaterial spirit! *Who art thou to be afraid of a man?*

But, if the soul, considered in its nature; if the soul, as a spiritual being, be superior to human tyranny; what homage, on this very account, what submission and abasement, or, to confine ourselves to the text, what *fear* ought we not to exercise toward the Supreme Being? *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?* God alone hath the power of destroying an immaterial soul; God alone hath the power of preserving it. God is *the* only *Father of spirits, Fear not them which kill the body: but fear them which is able to destroy the soul. Yea, I say unto you, fear him,* Luke xii. 5. God alone can act immediately on a spiritual creature. He needs neither the fragrance of flowers, nor the savour of foods, nor any of the mediums of matter, to communicate agreeable sensations to the soul. He needs neither the action of fire, the rigour of racks, nor the gallings of chains, to produce sensations of pain. He acts immediately to the soul. It is he, human soul! It is he, who, by leaving thee to revolve in the dark void of thine unenlightened mind, can deliver thee up to all the torments that usually follow ignorance, uncertainty, and doubt. But the same God can expand thine intelligence just when he pleaseth, and enable it to lay down principles, to infer consequences, to establish conclusions. It is he, who can impart new ideas to thee, teach thee to combine those which thou hast already acquired, enable thee to multiply numbers, shew thee how to conceive the infinitely various arrangements of matter, acquaint thee with the essence of thy thoughts, its different modifications and its endless operations. It is he who can grant thee new revelations, develope those which he hath already given thee, but which have hitherto lain in obscurity; he can inform thee of his purposes, his counsels, and decrees,

and

and lay before thee, if I may venture to say so, the whole history of time and eternity: For nothing, either hath subsisted in time or will subsist in eternity, but what was preconceived in the counsels of his infinite intelligence. It is he, who alone, and for ever, can excite infinite sensations of pleasure or pain within thee. It is he, who can apprehend the soul of a tyrant, amidst the most gay and festive objects, among the most servile flatteries of a court, and, in spite of a concourse of pleasures, produce such horrors and fears, and exquisite torments, as shall *change* even a Belshazzar's *countenance, trouble his thoughts, loose the joints of his loins, and smite his knees one against another*, Dan. v. 6. And it is he also, who is able to divert a sensation of pain, amidst the greatest torments, yea, to absorb a strong sensation of pain in a stronger sensation of pleasure. He can make a martyr triumph, all involved in fire and flame, by *shedding abroad* the effusions of *love* in his *heart*, Rom. v. 5. the *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, and which *keeps the senses*, Phil. iv. 7*. that is, a peace which is superior to the action of the senses, and not to be interrupted by the exercise of them. It is he, who can enable him to celebrate a victory during an apparent defeat; who can overflow, in a sufferers heart, the pains of martyrdom with the pleasures of paradise, and fill the mouth with shouts of triumph and songs of praise.

Speak, you martyrs of Jesus Christ, tell us what influence the infinite God hath over the soul! Be you our divines and philosophers. What did you feel, when penetrating through a shower of stones, you cried, *Behold we see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God?* Acts vii. 56. What did you feel, when experiencing all the rage of the cruel Nero, you exulted, *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God?* Rom. v. 2. But this is not the whole of the believers joy. The expectation of arriving at great happiness by means of tribulations may naturally produce a patient submission to tribulations. But here

* Our author uses the common reading of the French bible, which is *garde les sens*. The original word is used in the holy scriptures for *reflection*, Rom. vii. 25. and for *sensation*, James i. 23. The reason of our following the *French* reading in this place is obvious. Where the same reason does not oblige us, we have made it a law, in quotations of scripture, scrupulously to adhere to our English text.

here is something more. *We rejoice*, saith St. Paul, *in hope of the glory of God. And not only so*, adds he, (weigh this expressive sentence, my brethren) *not only so*; it is not only *the hope of the glory of God* that supports and comforts us; *not only so; but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost which is given unto us.* What did you feel, when your executioners, not being able to obtain your voluntary adoration of their idols, endeavoured to obtain it by force; when refusing to offer that incense which they had put into your hands, you sang, *Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight?* Psal. cxliv. 1. What did you feel, when wrapping your heads in the few rags that persecution had left you, you refused to look at the worship of idols, and patiently submitted to be bruised with bastinadoes, condemned to the gallies, and chained to the oars? What did you feel, when in that painful situation, you employed the remainder of your strength to look upward and to adore the God of heaven and earth? It is God who supports his creature amidst all these torments, and he alone can infinitely diversify and extend his sensibility. None but he can excite in the soul those ineffable pleasures, of which we have no ideas, and which we can express by no names; but which will be the objects of our eternal praises, if they be the objects of our present faith and hope. It is God, and only God, who can communicate happiness in this manner. None of this power is in the hand of man. *Who art thou*, spiritual creature, *to be afraid of a man?*

But, we add further, *Who art thou*, immortal creature, *to be afraid of a man that shall die?* The immortality of the soul elevates it above a mortal power, and renders supreme fear a just homage to none but to that Being whose dominion continues as long as the soul continues to exist. Can we be such novices, I do not say in the school of revelation, but in that of the most superficial reason, as to confound the duration of the soul with the duration of life? Or rather, are we so expert in the art of going from the great to the little, from the little to the less, from the less to the least divisible parts of time or of matter, as to assign an atom of matter so minute, or an instant of time so inconsiderable, that either of them would express the shortness of a mortal

life in comparison of the duration of an immortal soul? The most accurate teachers of logic and metaphysics forbid the use of the terms *length, duration, period,* in speaking of eternity. We may say *a length, a duration, a period,* of a thousand, or of ten thousand millions of ages: but if we speak accurately and philosophically, we cannot say *the duration of eternity, the length of eternity, the periods of eternity;* because all the terms that are applicable to time, are inadequate to eternity. No, no, you would attempt difficulties altogether insurmountable, were you to try to find a quantity so small as to express the shortness of a mortal life in comparison of the duration of an immortal soul. Not only the most expert mathematician is unequal to the attempt; but it implies a contradiction to affirm, that the infinite spirit can do this; becaue contradiction never is an object of infinite power, and because it implies a contradiction to measure the existence of an immortal soul by the duration of a mortal life. It can never be said that a hundred years are the thousandth, or the ten thousandth, or the hundred thousandth part of eternity. The inspired writers, whose language was often as just as their ideas were pure, have told us, that life is as the *withering grass;* as *a fading flower,* Isa. xl. 7. as *a declining shadow,* Psal. cii. 11. *swifter than* the rapid and imperceptible motion of *a weaver's shuttle,* Job. vii. 6. They call it *a vapour,* James iv. 14. that is dissipated in the air; *a dream,* Psal. lxxiii. 20. of which no vestige remains when the morning is come, *a thought** that vanisheth as soon as it is formed; *a phantom*† which *walketh in a vain shew.* But by all these emblems they meant to excite humility in us; but not to give us any ideas of a proportion between the duration of *withering grass, fading flowers, declining shadows,* the time of throwing a *weaver's shuttle,* of the dissipation of a *vapour,* of the passing of a *dream,* of the forming and losing of a *thought,* of the *appearance of a phantom,* and the eternal existence of an immortal soul. Such is the life of man! and such the duration of the dominion of a tyrant over an immortal soul! a duration which is only a point in eternity. A tyrant is mortal, his empire expires with his life, and were he to employ the whole course of his life in tormenting a martyr, and in trying to impair his felicity, he would resemble an idiot throwing stones at the lightning, while in an

* Psal. xc. 9. Heb. † Psal. xxxix. 5, 6. Heb.

an indivisible moment, and with an inconceivable rapidity, it caught his eye as it passed from the east to the west.

But God is *the king immortal*, 1 Tim. i. 17. and the eternity of his dominion is sufficient, my dear hearers, to demonstrate the truth of the text, and to fix all the possible attention of your minds on this question, *Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?* The immortal king is the only fit object of the fear of an immortal soul. There is no empire immortal but that of God, no dominion unchangeable but his. When the soul enters eternity it will be subject only to the God of eternity: *O my God, of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands: They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end!* Psal. cii. 24. We must, of necessity, take up again the words, *space*, *duration*, *period*, which we just now discarded for their impropriety, when applied to eternity. During the periods of eternity, through all the duration of the existence of him, who is *the same*, and whose *years shall have no end*, the immortal God will for ever produce the happiness, or the misery of an immortal soul. His dominion over it will be eternally exercised in rendering it happy or miserable. The reprobate soul will eternally be the object of the avenging power of this God, for it will eternally be under the hand of its judge. The faithful soul will eternally be the recipient of the beneficence of the immortal God, who is the worthy object, the only object, of solid hope and supreme fear. *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea I say unto you fear him. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Doth not* fear *appertain to thee* alone?

III. Here, my brethren, could I think I had been preaching to marbles, and to rocks; could I think I had been discoursing to men, who attended on the preacher without hearing the sermon, or who heard without understanding it; I should think other proofs needful to demonstrate, that God alone merited the homage of supreme fear. Could I think I had been preaching to men, who were all absorbed in sense and matter, and who could form no ideas in their minds

unless some material object were presented to their senses, or some imagery taken from sensible objects were used to excite them; I would insist on the third part of this discourse. If the idea of a Being, whose will is self-efficient, and who can act immediately on a spiritual soul, were not sufficient to incline you to render the homage of fear to God, I would represent him under the third notion which we gave you of him, as making all creatures fulfil his will. If tyrants, executioners, prisons, dungeons, racks, tortures, pincers, caldrons of boiling oil, gibbets, stakes, were necessary; if all nature, and all the elements were wanted to inspire that soul with fear, which is so far elevated above the elements, and all the powers of nature: I would prove to you that tyrants and executioners, prisons and dungeons, racks and tortures and pincers, caldrons of boiling oil, gibbets and stakes, all nature and all the elements fulfil the designs of *the King of nations;* and that when they seem the least under his direction, they are invariably accomplishing his will.

These are not imaginary ideas of mine: but they are taken from the same scriptures that establish the first ideas, which we have been explaining. What do our prophets and apostles say of tyrants, executioners, and persecutors? In what colours do they paint them? Behold how God contemns the proudest potentates: see how he mortifies and abases them. *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in your hand is mine indignation: howbeit thy heart doth not think so,* Isa. x. 5, 7. *The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers,* chap. xiv. 5. *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations. Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell,* ver. 11—15. *Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way thou camest,* chap. xxxvii. 29. O! how capable were our sacred authors of considering the grandees of the earth in their

their true point of light! O! how well they knew how to teach us what a king, or a tyrant, is in the presence of him, by whose command *kings decree justice*, Prov. viii. 15. and by whose permission, and even direction, tyrants decree injustice! The last words which we quoted from Isaiah, relate to Sennacherib. And who is this Sennacherib, whose general, Rabshakeh, is *come up with a great host* to overwhelm Jerusalem? 2 Kings xviii. 17. Where is this *great king of Assyria?* What is this insolent mortal, who saith: *Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of mine hand? Shall the Lord deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?* ver. 33, 34. What is this Sennacherib? And what are all those who tread in his arrogant steps? They are wild beasts: but wild beasts in chains, conducted whither an almighty arm pleaseth to lead them. The power of this arm is *a hook in the noses* of these animals, *a bridle in their lips;* it turneth them by *the hook* to the right or to the left, and it straighteneth or looseneth *the bridle* as it pleaseth. By this *hook*, by this *bridle*, God led the Assyrian beast without his knowing it, and when *his heart did not think so:* he led him from Assyria to Judea, from Judea to Assyria, as his wisdom required his presence in either place.

The prophets meant to inspire us with the same notion of insensible and inanimate beings, so that every thing which excites fear might lead us *to fear the King of nations*, who hath all things in his power, and moves all according to his own pleasure. We will not multiply proofs. The prophet, in the chapter out of which we have taken the text, mentions an object very fit to inspire us with the fear of *the King of nations*, who disposeth inanimate beings in such a manner: he describeth a tempest at sea. The gravity of this discourse, the majesty of this place, and the character of this auditory will not allow those descriptions which a sportive fancy invents. We allow students to exercise their imaginations in an academy, and we pass over their glaring images in favour of their youth and inexperience: but sometimes descriptions supply the place of arguments, and a solid logic not a puerile rhetoric requires them. We are now in this case. In order to humble man in the presence of *the King of nations*, we tell him, this King can make all creatures fulfil his will. With the same design, our prophet gives a sensible example of the power of God, by transporting

porting man to the ocean, and by shewing him *the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep*, Psal. cvii. 24. *God uttereth his voice*, saith he, in a verse that follows the text, *and there is a noise of a multitude of waters in the heavens. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth. He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures*, ver. 13. Thou dull stupid man! who art not stricken with the idea of a God, whose will is self-efficient, and who alone can act immediately on an immaterial soul, come and behold some sensible proofs of that infinite power, of which metaphysical proofs can give thee no idea! And thou, proud insolent man! go aboard the best-built vessel, put out to sea, set the most vigilant watch, surround thyself with the most formidable instruments; what art thou, when God *uttereth his voice?* What art thou, when the *noise* resounds? What art thou, when torrents of rain seem to threaten a second deluge, and to make the globe which thou inhabitest one rolling sea? What art thou, when lightnings emit their terrible flashes? What art thou, when *the winds* come roaring *out of their treasures?* What art thou then? Verily, thou art no less than thou wast in thy palace. Thou art no less than when thou wast sitting at a delicious table. Thou art no less than thou wast when every thing contributed to thy pleasure. Thou art no less than when, at the head of thine army, thou wast the terror of nations, shaking the earth with the stunning noise of thy warlike instruments: for, at thy festal board within thy palace, among thy pleasures, at the head of thine armies, thou wast nothing before *the King of nations*. As an immaterial and immortal creature, thou art subject to his immediate power: but, to humble and to confound thee, he must manifest himself to thee in sensible objects. Behold him then in this formidable situation: try thy power against his: silence *the noise of the multitude of waters:* fasten the vessel that *reeleth like a drunken man*, Psal. cvii. 27. smooth the foaming waves that *mount thee up to heaven*, ver. 26. fill up the horrible gulphs whither thou goest *down to the bottoms of the mountains*, Jonah ii. 7. dissipate the lightning that flasheth in thy face; hush the bellowing thunders; confine the winds in their caverns; assuage the anguish of thy soul, and prevent its melting and exhaling with fear. How diminutive is man! my brethren. How many ways hath God to confound his pride! *He uttereth his voice, and there is a noise of a multitude of waters*

ters in the heavens. He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth. He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?

In this manner the prophets represent all beings, animate and inanimate, material and immaterial, as concurring in the Creator's will. This is not a truth which requires the submission of faith, but every branch of it proceeds from reason, and is supported by experience. When God willeth the destruction, or the deliverance, of a people, all creation executes his design, when he is angry, every thing becomes an instrument of vengeance. A cherub, brandishing a flaming sword, prevents the return of guilty man to paradise. The air infected, the earth covered with noxious plants, the brute creation enraged, wage war with the rebel. Grasshoppers become *the Lord's great army*, Joel ii. 11. flies swarm, waters change into blood, light turns to darkness, and all besiege the palace and the person of Pharaoh. The heavens themselves, *the stars in their courses fight against Sisera*, Judges v. 20. The earth yawns, and swallows up Dathan and Abiram in its frightful caverns. Fire consumes Nadab, and Abihu, Korah and his company. A fish buries alive the prevaricating Jonah in his wide mouth. But on the contrary, when God declares himself for a people, there is nothing in the universe, which God cannot make a mean of happiness. The heavens unfurl their beauties; the sun expands his light; the earth adorns herself with flowers, and loads herself with fruits, to entertain the favourite of *the King of nations;* while the animals become teachable, and offer to bow to his service. *All things work together for good to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. *All things are yours, whether Paul, or Cephas, or the world*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. *Behold, I will do a new thing. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls; because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desart to give drink to my people, my chosen*, Isa. xliii. 19. 23. *Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Drop down, ye heavens from above, let the earth open and bring forth salvation!* Chap. lv. 12. and xlv. 8.

Thus, my brethren, hath God proportioned himself to our meanness and dulness, in order to inspire us with fear.

It

It is necessary, to make us fear God, that we should see bodies, various parts, and prodigious masses of matter, march at his word to fulfil his will? Well, Behold bodies, in various parts and in vast masses! Behold universal nature moving at his word, and fulfilling his will! Let us fear God in this view of him, if our minds enveloped in matter cannot conceive an idea of a Being, whose will is self-efficient, and who alone can act on immaterial souls. But, my brethren, a mind accustomed to meditation hath no occasion for this last notion: the first absorbs all. A God, every act of whose will is effectual, is alone worthy of the homage of fear. A just notion of his power renders all ideas of means useless. The power of God hath no need of means. Were I existing alone with God, God could make me supremely happy, or supremely miserable: one act of his will is sufficient to do either. We do not mean to enlarge the idea, when, speaking of an all-sufficient Creator, who is superior to the want of means, we treat of a concurrence of creatures: we only mean to level the subject to the capacities of some of our hearers.

Let us sum up what has been said. To consider a creature as the cause of human felicity is to pay him the homage of adoration, and to commit idolatry. The avaricious man is an idolater; the ambitious man is an idolater; the voluptuous man is an idolater: And to render to a creature, the homage of fear is also idolatry; for supreme fear is as much due to God alone as supreme hope. He, who fears war, and doth not fear the God, who sends war, is an idolater. He, who fears the plague, and who doth not fear the God, who sends the plague, is an idolater.

It is idolatry, in public, or in private adversities, to have recourse to second causes, to little subordinate deities, so as to neglect to appease the wrath of the Supreme God. To consult the wise, to assemble a council, to man fleets, to raise armies, to build forts, to elevate ramparts, and not to consider the succour of heaven, which alone is capable of giving success to all such means, is to be guilty of idolatry. Isaiah reproveth the Jews in the most severe manner for this kind of idolatry. *In that day*, saith the prophet, speaking of the precautions which they had taken to prevent the designs of their enemies; *In that day thou didst look to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses*

houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye have made also a ditch between the two walls, for the water of the old *pool: but ye have not looked unto the Maker* of this Jerusalem, *neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts,* chap. xxii. 8.—14. Do we deserve less cutting reproaches? *In that day*, in the day of our public and private calamities, we have consulted wise men, we have assembled councils, we have fitted our fleets, and raised armies, we have pretended by them to secure these provinces from impending dangers, and we have *not had respect unto him that fashioned them long ago.* But what are wise men? What are councils? What are navies? What are armies, and fortifications, but subordinate beings, which God directs as he pleaseth? Ah! ye penitential tears, ye days of sackcloth and ashes, ye solemn humiliations, ye sighs that ascend to God, ye fervent prayers, ye saints, who impart your souls in fervour; and above all, ye sincere conversions to *the King of nations*, love to his laws, obedience to his commands, submission to his will, tenderness to his people, zeal for his altar, devotedness to his worship; if ye do not prevail with *the King of nations* to favour our designs, what must our destiny be? And ye tragical designs, black attempts, shameful plots, impure associations, criminal intrigues, execrable oaths, atrocious calumnies, cruel falshoods, with what oceans of misery will ye overflow us, if ye arm *the King of nations* against us.

To conclude. There is much imbecility, if no idolatry, in us, if, while we fear God, we stand in too much awe of second causes, which sometimes appear terrible to us. No, no, revolution of ages, subversion of states, domestic seditions, foreign invasions, contagious sicknesses, sudden and untimely deaths, ye are only the servants of that God, whose favourite creature I am. If, by his command, ye execute some terrible order on me, I will receive it as a comfortable order, because it is executed only for my good. Trouble my peace: perhaps it may be fatal to me. Turn the tide of my

prosperity, which seems to constitute my glory: perhaps it may be dangerous to me. Snap the silken bonds, which bind me to objects, that have so much influence on the happiness of my life: perhaps they may become my idols. Pluck out my eyes, cut off my hands: perhaps they may cause me to *offend*, and may plunge me into the bottomless abyss, Matt. xviii 8. Bind me to a cross: provided it be my Saviour's cross. Cut the thread of my life: provided the gates of immortal happiness be opened to me.

Christians, let us satiate our souls with these meditations. Let us give up our hearts to these emotions. Let us fear God, and let us fear nothing else. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob. Fear thou not, for I am with thee: Be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain*, Isa. xli. 10, 14. May God inspire us with these sentiments! To him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

THE MANNER OF PRAISING GOD.

Preached after the administration of the Lord's Supper.

PSALM xxxiii. 1.

Praise is comely for the upright.

THERE is something very noble, my brethren, in the end for which we are now assembled in the presence of God. His Providence hath infinitely diversified the conditions of those who compose this assembly. Some are placed in the most eminent, others in the most obscure posts of society. Some live in splendor and opulence, others in meanness and indigence. One is employed in the turbulence of the army, another in the silence of the study. Notwithstanding this infinite variety of employments, ranks, and ages, we all assemble to-day in one place; one object occupies us; one sentiment animates us; one voice makes the church resound, *Praise ye the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever*, Psal. cxxxvi. 1. If there be an object, that can give a mortal any ideas of the first impressions, which are made on a soul, at its first entering the glorious palace of the blessed God in heaven, it is this. The first objects, that strike such a soul, are multitudes of all nations, tongues, and people, concentered in a meditation on the beneficence of God, prostrating themselves before his throne, casting their crowns at his feet, and crying out of the abundance of their hearts, which contemplate the perfections of a Being worthy of their profoundest praise, *Amen, Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might,*

might, be unto our God, for ever and ever, Amen, Rev. vii. 12. *We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned,* chap. xi. 17. *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints!* chap. xv. 3. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen,* chap. i. 5, 6. This is the employment of the blessed in heaven: this is what we are doing to day on earth.

But what a contradiction, what a contrast appears, when, lifting up the exterior habit of piety, that covers some of us, we examine the inward dispositions of the heart. The psalms, which are uttered with the voice, are contradicted by the tempers of the heart. The mouths, that were just now opened to bless the Creator, will presently be opened again to blaspheme and to curse him. The praises, which seemed so proper to please him in whose honour they were offered, will incur this reproof, Thou *wicked* man! *What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?* Psal. l. 16.

My brethren, if we would join our voices with those of angels, we must have the sentiments of angels. We must, (at least, as far as the duty is imitable by such frail creatures) we must, in order to worship God, as those happy spirits praise him, love him as they do, serve him as they do, devote ourselves to him as they devote themselves to him; and this is the manner of praising God, to which I exhort, and in which I would endeavour to instruct you to day, agreeably to the prophet's exalted notion of it in the words of the text. What day can be more proper to inspire such a noble design? What day can be more proper to engage you to mix your worship with that of glorified intelligences, than this, on which we are come *unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, and to the first-born which are written in heaven?* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

But, who are we, to be admitted into a society so holy? Great God! Thou dost appear to us to day, as thou didst formerly to thy prophet, *sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and thy train filling the temple,* Isa. vi. 1. Around thee stand the Seraphims, covering themselves with their wings in thy majestic presence, and crying one to another,

another, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*, ver. 3. We are stricken, as thy prophet was, with such a tremendous vision, and each of us cries with him, *Wo is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips!* and yet, *mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*, ver. 5. O great God! command one of thy Seraphims to fly to us, as he flew to him; bid him touch our mouths, as he touched his, with *a live coal taken from off the altar*, ver. 6. and, in this day of grace and mercy, let him say to each of us, *Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged! Amen*, ver. 7.

Praise is comely for the upright. The praising of God is a duty, of which we may form two different notions: a *general*, and a *particular* notion. By a *general* notion of praise, I mean, the exercise of a man, who, being capable of examining sublime objects, and of comprehending grand subjects, fixeth his attention on the attributes of God, feels the force of those proofs which establish the truth of them, is delighted with them, to a certain degree, and is happy in publishing their praise. I mean, by a *particular* notion of praising God, the exercise of a man, who, having received some signal favour of God, loves to express his gratitude for it.

Each of these exercises of praise supposeth *reflections*, and *sentiments*. To praise God in the first sense, to reflect on his attributes, to converse, and to write about them, without having the heart affected, and without loving a Being, who is described as supremely amiable, is a lifeless praise, more fit for a worldly philosopher than for a rational christian. To praise God in the second sense, to be affected with the favours of God, without having any distinct notions of God, without knowing whether the descriptions of the perfections, that are attributed to him, be flights of fancy or real truths, is an exercise more fit for a bigot, who believes without knowing why, than for a *spiritual man, who judgeth all things*, 1 Cor. ii. 15. If we distinguish the part, which these two faculties, reflection, and sentiment, take in these two exercises of praise, we may observe that the first, I mean, the praise of God taken in a general sense, is the fruit of *reflection*, and the second of *sentiment*. The first is, if I may be allowed to speak so, the praise of the mind: the second is the praise of the heart.

It is difficult to determine which of these two notions prevails

vails in the text, whether the psalmist use the word *praise* in the first, or in the second sense. If we judge by the whole subject of the psalm both are included. The praise of the heart is easily discovered. Whether the author of the psalm were Hezekiah, as many of the fathers thought, who say, this prince composed it after the miraculous defeat of Sennacherib: or whether, which is most likely, David were the composer of it, after one of those preternatural deliverances, with which his life was so often signalized: what I call the praise of the heart, that is, a lively sense of some inestimable blessing, is clearly to be seen. On the other hand, it is still clearer, that the sacred author doth not celebrate only one particular object in the psalm. He gives a greater scope to his meditation, and compriseth in it all the works, and all the perfections of God.

Although the solemnity of this day calls us less to the praise of the mind, than to that of the heart; although we intend to make the latter the principal subject of this discourse; yet it is necessary to attend a little to the former.

I. *The praise of the Lord*, taking the word praise in the vague sense, that we have affixed to the term, *is comely for the upright:* and it is comely for none but for them.

Praise is comely for the upright. Nothing is more worthy of the attention of an intelligent being, particularly, nothing is more worthy of the imitation of a superior genius, than the wonderful perfections of the Creator. A man of superior genius is required, indeed, to use his talents to cultivate the sciences and the liberal arts: but after all, the mind of man, especially of that man to whom God hath given superior talents, which assimilate him to celestial intelligences, was not created to unravel a point in chronology, to learn the various sounds by which different nations signify their ideas, to measure a line, or to lose itself in an algebraic calculation; the mind of such a man was not created to study the stars, to count their number, to measure their magnitude, to discover more than have yet been observed. Nobler objects ought to occupy him. It becomes such a man to contemplate God, to guide the rest of mankind, to lead them to God, who *dwelleth in the light, which no man can approach unto*, 1 Tim. vi, 16. and to teach us to attenuate the clouds, that hide him from our feeble eyes. It becomes such a man to use that superiority, which his knowledge gives him over us, to elevate our hearts above the low region of terrestrial

terrestrial things, where they grovel with the brute beasts, and to help us to place them on the bright abode of the immortal God. The *praise* of the Lord *is comely for upright men.*

But praise is comely *only for upright men.* I believe it is needless now to explain the word *uprightness.* The term is taken in the text in the noblest sense: this is a sufficient explication, and this is sufficient also to convince us that the praising of God is comely for none but upright men. I cannot see, without indignation, a philosopher trifle with the important questions that relate to the attributes of God, and make them simple exercises of genius, in which the heart hath no concern, examining whether there be a God with the same indifference with which he inquires whether there be a vacuum in nature, or whether matter be infinitely divisible. On determining the questions which relate to the divine attributes, depend our hopes and fears, the plans we must form, and the course of life we ought to pursue: and with these views we should examine the perfections of God: these are consequences that should follow our enquiries. With such dispositions the psalmist celebrated the praises of God, in the psalm out of which we have taken the text. How comely are the praises of God in the mouth of such a man!

Let us follow the holy man a moment in his meditation. His psalm is not composed in scholastic form, in which the author confines himself to fixed rules, and scrupulously following a philosophical method, lays down principles, and infers consequences. However, he establisheth principles the most proper to give us sublime ideas of the Creator; and he speaks with more precision of the works and attributes of God than the greatest philosophers have spoken them.

How absurdly have philosophers treated of the origin of the world? How few of them have reasoned conclusively on this importat subject? Our prophet solves the important question by one single principle, and what is more remarkable, this principle, which is nobly expressed, carries the clearest evidence with it. The principle is this: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* This is the most rational account that was ever given of the creation of the world The world is the work of a self-efficient will, and it is this principle alone that can account for its creation. The most simple appearances in nature are sufficient to lead us to this

this principle. Either my will is self-efficient, or there is some other being whose will is self-efficient.

What I say of myself, I say of my parents, and what I affirm of my parents, I affirm of my more remote ancestors, and of all the finite creatures from whom they derived their existence. Most certainly, either finite beings have self-efficient wills, which it is impossible to suppose, for a finite creature with a self-efficient will is a contradiction: either, I say, a finite creature hath a self-efficient will; or there is a first cause who hath a self-efficient will; and that there is such a being is the principle of the psalmist; *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*

If philosophers have reasoned inconclusively on the origin of the world, they have spoken of its government with equal uncertainty. The psalmist determines this question with great facility, by a single principle, which results from the former, and which, like the former, carries its evidence with it. *The Lord looketh from heaven: he considereth all the works of all the inhabitants of the earth*, ver. 13, 14. This is the doctrine of Providence. And on what is the doctrine of Providence founded? On this principle: God *fashioneth their hearts alike*, ver. 15. Attend a moment to the evidence of this reasoning, my brethren. The doctrine of Providence, expressed in these words *God considereth the works of the inhabitants of the earth* is a necessary consequence of this principle, *God fashioneth their hearts alike*, and this principle is a necessary consequence of that which the psalmist had before laid down to account for the origin of the world. Yes! from the doctrine of God the Creator of men, follows that of God the inspector, the director, the rewarder, and the punisher of their actions. One of the most specious objections, that hath ever been opposed to the doctrine of Providence, is a contrast between the grandeur of God and the meanness of men. How can such an insignificant creature as man be an object of the care and attention of such a magnificent Being as God? No objection can be more specious, or, in appearance, more invincible. The distance between the meanest insect and the mightiest monarch, who treads and crushes reptiles to death without the least regard to them, is a very imperfect image of the distance between God and man. That which proves that it would be beneath the dignity of a monarch to observe the

the motions of ants, or worms, to interest himself in their actions, to punish, or to reward them, seems to demonstrate, that God would degrade himself were he to observe, to direct, to punish, to reward mankind, who are infinitely inferior to him. But, one fact is sufficient to answer this specious objection: That is, that God hath created mankind. Doth God degrade himself more by governing than by creating mankind? Who can persuade himself, that a wise Being hath given to intelligent creatures faculties capable of obtaining knowledge and virtue, without willing that they should endeavour to acquire knowledge and virtue? Or who can imagine, that a wise Being, who willeth that his intelligent creatures should acquire knowledge and virtue, will not punish them, if they neglect those acquisitions; and will not shew by the distribution of his benefits that he approves their endeavours to obtain them?

Unenlightened philosophers have treated of the attributes of God with as much abstruseness as they have written of his works. The *moral attributes* of God, as they are called in the schools, were mysteries which they could not unfold. These may be reduced to two classes: attributes of *goodness*, and attributes of *justice*. Philosophers, who have admitted these, have usually taken that for granted which they ought to have proved. They collected together in their minds all perfections, they reduced them all to one object, which they denominated *a perfect being:* and supposing, without proving, that a perfect Being existed, they attributed to him, without proof, every thing that they considered as a perfection. The psalmist shews by a surer way that there is a God supremely just, and supremely good. It is necessary, in order to convince a rational being of the justice and goodness of God, to follow such a method as that which we follow to prove his existence. When we would prove the existence of God, we say, there are creatures; therefore, there is a Creator. In like manner, when we would prove, that the Creator is a just, and a good Being, we say, there are qualities of goodness and justice in creatures; therefore, he, from whom these creatures derive their existence, is a Being just and good. Now this is the reasoning of the psalmist, in this psalm: *The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment, the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord*, ver. 5. that is to say, it is impossible to consider the works of the Creator, without receiving evidence of his goodness. And the works of nature, which de-

monstrate the goodness of God, prove his justice also: for God hath created us with such dispositions, that we cannot enjoy the gifts of his goodness without obeying the laws of his righteousness. The happiness of an individual, who procures a pleasure by disobeying the laws of equity, is a violent happiness, which cannot be of long duration: and the prosperity of public bodies, when it is founded in iniquity, is an edifice, which with its bases will be presently sunk and gone.

But what we would particularly remark is, that the excellent principles of the psalmist, concerning God, are not mere speculations: but truths from which he derives practical inferences; and he aims to extend their influence beyond private persons, even to legislators and conquerors. One would think, considering the conduct of mankind, that the consequences, which are drawn from the doctrines of which we have been speaking, belong to none but to the dregs of the people; that law-givers and conquerors have a plan of morality peculiar to themselves, and are above the rules to which other men must submit. Our prophet had other notions. What are his maxims of policy? They are all included in these words: *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance*, ver. 12. What are his military maxims? They are all included in these words: *There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength: An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength*, ver. 16, 17. Who proposeth these maxims? A hermit, who never appeared on the theatre of the world? or a man destitute of the talents necessary to shine there? No: one of the wisest of kings; one of the most bold and able generals; a man, whom God himself elected to govern his chosen people, and to command those armies, which fought the most obstinate battles, and gained the most complete victories Were I to proceed in explaining the system of the psalmist, I might prove, that as he had a right to infer the doctrine of providence from the works of nature, and that of the moral attributes of God from the works of creation; so, from the doctrines of the moral attributes of God, of providence, and of the works of creation, he had a right to conclude, that no conquerors or law-givers could be truly happy but those, who acted agreeably to the laws of the just and good Supreme. But I shall not enlarge on this article.

Permit

Permit me only to place in one point of view the different phrases, by which the psalmist describes the Deity in this psalm. *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. The Lord looketh from heaven: he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looked upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works,* ver. 5—7, 13—15. From these speculative ideas of God, he derives the following rules of practice. *Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him: because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we hope in thee,* ver. 8, 20—22. How delightful it is, my brethren, to speak of God, when one hath talents to speak of him in such a noble manner, and when one intends to promote the fear and the love of him, with an universal obedience to him, from all that is said! How well it becomes such a man to praise God! The *praise* of the Lord *is comely* in the mouths of *upright* men.

II. Let us now apply the subject more immediately to the service of this day. *To praise God* is a phrase, which is sometimes taken, in a particular sense, for the exercise of a person, who, having received singular favours of God, delights in expressing his gratitude to him. This *praise is comely* in the mouth of an *upright* man for four reasons.

First. Because he arrangeth them in their true order, highly estimating what deserves a high esteem, and most highly estimating what deserves the highest esteem.

Secondly. Because he employs all his benefits in the service of his benefactor.

Thirdly. Because, while he recounts his blessings, he divests himself of all merit, and ascribes them only to the goodness of God from whom they proceed.

Fourthly. Because he imitates that goodness and love, which inclined God to bless him in such a manner.

I will affix to each of these reflections a single word. *Praise*, or if you will, *gratitude, is comely for the upright*, because it is *wise*, *real*, *humble*, and *magnanimous*:

In these four respects, *praise is comely for the upright.* These are the sentiments, with which the holy sacrament, of which we have taken this morning, should inspire us. These are the most important reflections, with which we can close this discourse.

1. The gratitude of upright men is *wise.* The praise of the Lord becomes them well, because, while they bless God for all their mercies, they arrange them in their proper order; they prize each according to its real worth, and that most of all which is of the greatest value. It is a very mortifying reflection, my brethren, that the more we study ourselves, the more clearly we perceive, that the love of the world, and of sensible things, is the chief springs of all our actions and sentiments. This disagreeable truth is proved, not only by the nature of our vices, but even by the genius of our virtues; not only by the offences we commit against God, but by the very duties we perform in his service.

A person so ungrateful, as not to discover any gratitude to God, when he bestows temporal blessings on him, can scarcely be found. We praise God, when he delivers us from any public calamity, or from any domestic adversity; when he recovers us from dangerous illness; when he raiseth us up an unexpected friend, or a protector, who assists us; when he sends us some prosperity, which renders life more easy. In such cases as these, we render an homage to God, that cannot be refused without ingratitude.

But we are extremely blameable, when, while we feel the value of these blessings, we remain insensible of the worth of other blessings, which are infinitely more valuable, and which merit infinitely more gratitude. A blessing, that directly regards the soul, is more valuable than one which regards only the body. A blessing, that regards our eternal happiness, is of greater worth, than one which influenceth only the happiness of this life. Whence is it then, that, being so sensible of blessings of the first kind, we are so little affected with those of the last? How comes it to pass, that we are so full of gratitude, when God gives the state some signal victory; when he prospers its trade; when he strengthens the bonds, that unite it to powerful and faithful allies; and so void of it, while he continues to grant it the greatest blessing that a society of rational creatures can enjoy, I mean a liberty to serve God according to the dictates of our own consciences? Whence is it, that we are so very thankful to God for preserving our lives from the dangers

dangers that daily threaten them; and so little thankful for his miraculous patience with us, to which it is owing, that, after we have hardened our hearts against his voice one year, he invites us another year; after we have falsified our promises made on one solemnity, he calls us to another solemnity, and giveth us new opportunities of being more faithful to him? Whence comes this difference? Follow it to its source. Does it not proceed from what we just now said? Is not love of the world, and of sensible things, the grand spring of our actions and sentiments? The world, the world; lo! this is the touchstone, by which we judge of good and evil!

An *upright* man judgeth in another manner: he will, indeed, bless God for all his benefits; but as he knows how to arrange them, so he knows how to prize each according to its worth, and how to apportion his esteem to the real value of them all.

According to such an estimation, what ought not our gratitude to God be to-day, my dear brethren! we may assure ourselves with the utmost truth, that had the Lord united in our houses to-day pleasures, grandeurs, and dignities; had he promised each of us a life longer than that of a patriarch; a family as happy as that of Job, after his misfortunes; glory as great as that of Solomon; he would have bestowed nothing equal to that blessing, which he gave us this morning. He forgave those sins, which, had they taken their natural course, would have occasioned endless remorse, and would have plunged us into everlasting misery and woe. A peace was *shed abroad* in our consciences, which gave us a foretaste of heaven. He excited hopes, that absorbed our souls in their grandeur. Let us say all in one word: he gave us his Son. *He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

2. The gratitude of upright men is *real*. The praise of the Lord becomes them, because, while they praise God for his benefits, they live to the glory of their benefactor. Every gift of God furnisheth us with both a motive and a mean of obedience to him. It is an excess of ingratitude to make a contrary use of his gifts, and to turn the benefits that we receive, against the benefactor from whom we receive them. What gifts are they, by which God hath most distinguished us? Thee he hath distinguished by a penetrating genius, which renders the highest objects, the deepest mysteries

steries, accessible to thee. Wo be to thee! if thou employ this gift to invent arguments against the truths of religion, and to find out sophisms that befriend infidelity. An *upright* man devotes this gift to his benefactor; he avails himself of his genius, to discover the folly of sceptical sophisms, and to demonstrate the truth of religion. On thee he hath bestowed an astonishing memory. Wo be to thee! if thou use it to retain the pernicious maxims of the world. An *upright* man dedicates this gift to his benefactor; he employs his memory in retaining the excellent lessons of equity, charity, and patience, which the holy Spirit hath taught him in the scriptures. To thee he hath given an authoritative elocution, to which every hearer is forced to bow. Wo be to thee! if thou apply this rare talent to seduce the minds, and to deprave the hearts, of mankind. An *upright* man devotes this blessing to the service of his benefactor; he useth his eloquence to free the minds of men from error, and their lives from vice. Towards thee God hath exercised a patience, which seems contrary to his usual rules of conduct toward sinners, and by which he hath abounded toward thee in forbearance and long-suffering. Wo be to thee! if thou turn this blessing into an opportunity of violating the commands of God; if thine obstinacy run parallel with his patience, and if, *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily*, thy *heart* be *fully set* in thee *to do evil*, Eccles. viii. 11. An *upright* man devotes this blessing to his benefactor's service. From the patience of God he derives motives of repentance. How easily might this article be enlarged! how fruitful in instruction would it be on this solemnity! But we proceed.

3. Gratitude to God well becomes an upright man, because it is *humble:* because an upright man, by publishing the gifts of God's grace divests himself of himself, and attributes them wholly to the goodness of him from whom they came. Far from us be a profane mixture of the real grandeurs of the Creator with the fanciful grandeurs of creatures! Far be those praises, in which he who offers them always finds, in his own excellence, the motives that induced the Lord to bestow his benefits on him!

Two reflections always exalt the gifts of God in the eyes of an upright man: a reflection on his meanness, and a reflection on his unworthiness: and it is with this comeliness of humility, if I may venture to call it so, that I wish to engage you to praise God for the blessings of this day.

1. Meditate

1. Meditate on your *meanness.* Contrast yourselves with God, who gives himself to you to-day in such a tender manner. How soon is the capacity of man absorbed in the works and attributes of God! Conceive, if thou be capable, the grandeur of a Being, who *made the heavens by his word, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* Think, if thou be capable of thinking, of the glory of a Being, who existed from all eternity, whole understanding is infinite, whose power is irresistible, whose will is above controul. Behold him filling the whole universe with his presence. Behold him in the palace of his glory, *inhabiting the praises* of the blessed, Psal. xxii. 3. surrounded by thousand thousands, and by ten thousand times ten thousand angels, who excel in strength, and who delight to fly at the first signal of his will. Thou human soul! contemplate this object, and recover thy reason. What art thou? What was thine origin? What is thine end? Thou diminutive atom! great only in thine own eyes; behold thyself in thy true point of view. Dust! Ashes! Putrefaction! glorious only at the tribunal of thine own pride; divest thyself of the tawdry grandeur in which thou lovest to array thyself. Thou vapour! Thou dream! Thou exhalation of the earth! evaporating in the air, and having no other consistence than what thine own imagination gives thee; behold thy vanity and nothingness. Yet this dream, this exhalation, this vapour, this dust and ashes and putrefaction, this diminutive creature, is an object of the eternal care and love of its God. For thee, contemptible creature! the Lord stretched out the heavens: for thee he laid the foundation of the earth: let us say more: For thee, contemptible creature! God formed the plan of redemption. What could determine the great Jehovah to communicate himself, in such a tender and intimate manner, to so contemptible a creature as man? His goodness, his goodness alone.

Although a sense of our meanness should not terrify and confound us, yet it should exclude arrogance, and excite lowly sentiments: But what will our humility be, if we estimate the gifts of God's grace by an idea of our unworthiness? Let each recollect the mortifying history of his own life. Remember, thou! thy fiery youth, in which, forgetting all the principles that thy pious parents had taught thee, thou didst acknowledge no law but thine own passionate and capricious will. Remember, thou! that period, in which thy heart being infatuated with one object, and wholly employed

ployed about it, thou didst make it thine idol, and didst sacrifice to it thine honour, thy duty, thy God. Recollect, thou! the cruel use, that for many years, thou didst make of thy credit, thy riches, thy rank, when, being devoured with self-love, thou wast insensible to the voice of the widow and the orphan, and to a number of distressed people, who solicited relief. Remember, thou! that fatal hour, the recollection of which ought to make thy *head waters, and thine eyes a fountain of tears*, Jer. ix. 1. that fatal hour, in which, God having put thee into the fiery trial of persecution, thou couldst not abide the proof. Like Peter, thou didst *not know* a disgraced Redeemer; thou didst cowardly abandon a persecuted church, and wast just on the point of abjuring thy religion. Let each of us so consider himself as he seems in the eyes of a holy God. A criminal worthy of the most rigorous punishments! Let each of us say to himself, Notwithstanding all this, it is I, guilty I; I, whose sins are more in number than the hairs on my head; it is I, who have been admitted this morning into the house of God; it is I, who have been invited this morning to that mystical repast, which sovereign wisdom itself prepared; it is I, who have been encouraged against the just fears, which the remembrance of my sins had excited, and have heard the voice of God, proclaiming in my conscience, *Fear not thou worm Jacob*, Isa. xli. 14. It is I, who have been *abundantly satisfied with the fatness of the house* of God, and have *drunk of the river of his pleasures*, Psal. xxxvi. 8. What inclines God to indulge me in this manner? Goodness only! O surpassing and inconceivable goodness! thou shalt for ever be the object of my meditation and gratitude! *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God!* ver. 7. These are sentiments that ought to animate our praise to-day. Such *praise is comely for the upright.*

Finally, The gratitude of an upright man is *noble* and *magnanimous*. The praise of God well becomes the mouth of an upright man, because he takes the love of God to him for a pattern of his behaviour to his fellow creatures. St. Paul hath very emphatically expressed the happy change which the gospel produceth in true christians. *We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Some commentators, instead of reading *we all beholding as in a glass*, as the expression is rendered in our translation, render the words, *we all becoming mirrors*. I will not undertake to prove

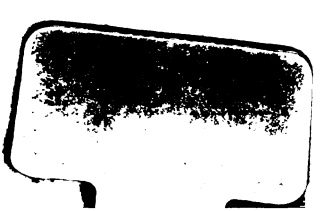
prove that this is the meaning of the term: it is certainly the sense of the apostle*. He means to inform us, that the impression, which the evangelical display of the perfections of God makes on the souls of believers, engraves them on their minds, and renders them like mirrors, that reflect the rays, and the objects which are placed opposite to them, and represent their images. *They behold the glory of the Lord with open face. They are changed from glory to glory into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* I wish, my brethren, that the impression, which was made on you by the generosity and magnanimity of God, who loaded you this morning with his gracious benefits, may transform you to-day *into the same image from glory to glory.* I would animate you with this, the most noble, the most sublime, the most comfortable, way of praising God.

What gave you so much peace and pleasure this morning, in what God did for you? Was it the pardon of your sins? Imitate it; pardon your brethren. Was it his past forbearance with you? Imitate it; moderate that impatience which the ingratitude of your brethren excites in your minds. Was it that spirit of communication, which disposed a God, who is all-sufficient to his own happiness, to go out of himself, as it were, and to communicate his felicity to creatures? Imitate it; go out of those intrenchments of prosperity in which you

* The idea of *reflecting*, while one contemplates, *the attributes of God*, is a very fine thought, and fully expressive of the benevolent effects which christianity produceth in its disciples; but Mr. Saurin, whose business as a christian minister was not with *the fine*, but *the true*, only meant, by what he said above, that it was agreeable to *the general design* of the apostle. Erasmus was the first who translated St. Paul's term κατοπτριζομενοι in speculo *repræsentantes*. Beza renders it in speculo *intuentes*; and the French bibles have it, nous *contemplons* comme en un miroir. Our author was delighted with the ingenuity of Erasmus, however he could not accede to his translation, because, 1. He could meet with no Greek author, cotemporary with St. Paul, who had used the term in the sense of Erasmus. 2. Because he could not perceive any connection between that signification and the phrase *with open face*. He abode therefore by the usual reading. See Serm. Tom. ix. S. viii. My idea of an object pleases me, therefore it is a true idea of it, is contemptible logic; yet how many pretended articles of religion have arisen from this way of reasoning!

lodge, and impart your benefits to your brethren. Was it the continual watchfulness of God for the salvation of your souls? Imitate it; exert yourselves for the salvation of the souls of your brethren; suffer not those, who are united to you by all the ties of nature, society, and religion, to perish through your lukewarmness and negligence. While you triumphantly exclaim, on this solemn festival, *Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation!* Psal. xcv. 1. Remember your persecuted brethren, to whom God refuseth this pleasure; remember *the ways of Zion*, that *mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts*, Lam. i. 4.

My brethren, how pleasing is a christian festival! How comfortable the institution, to which we were this morning called! But I remember here a saying of Jesus Christ to his apostles, *I have other sheep which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd*, John x. 16. Alas! we also have sheep in another fold. When shall we have the comfort of bringing them into this? Ye divided families! who are present in this assembly, when will you be united? Ye children of the reformation! whom the misfortunes of the times have torn from us; ye dear parts of ourselves! when will you come to us? When will you be re-gathered to the flock of the great *shepherd and bishop of our souls?* When will ye shed in our assemblies tears of repentance, for having lived so long without a church, without sacraments, without public worship? When will ye shed tears of joy for having recovered these advantages?

Great God! Thou great *God who hidest thyself!* is it to extinguish, or to enflame our zeal, that thou delayest the happy period? Are our hopes suspended or confounded? God grant, my dear brethren, that the *praise*, which we render to the Lord for all his benefits, may obtain their continuance and increase! And God grant, while he giveth us our *lives for a prey*, Jer. xxi. 9. that those of our brethren may be given us also! to him be honour and glory for ever! Amen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.